

**The Rules of
Christian Decorum
and Civility**

LES REGLES

DE LA

BIEN-SEANCE

ET DE LA

CIVILITE' CHRESTIENNE

Divisé en deux Parties.

A L'USAGE DES ECOLES
Chrestiennes.



à Troyes & se vend.

A REIMS,

Chez François Godard; Margand Libraire
rue des Tapissiers.

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The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility

John Baptist de La Salle

Translated by Richard Arnandez, FSC
Edited by Gregory Wright, FSC

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This volume is dedicated to Frère Albert-Valentin,
editor of *Édition Critique des "Règles de la Bienséance
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Introduction

Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne, written between 1694 and 1702 and first published in 1703, is a unique Lasallian document.* As a book of decorum and civility which attempted to provide religious motivation for customs in seventeenth-century French society, it has obvious historic, social, and moral value. As a classroom reader originally intended for use by boys in the Christian Schools and as a book which had a wide readership even outside the schools for almost two centuries, it is of educational interest. *Les Règles de la Bienséance* is one of the most popular school books on politeness in the history of education and among the most widely read of De La Salle's writings. It is significant for the light it sheds on the personality of John Baptist de La Salle, revealing him as a person of great sensitivity and refinement. The historian Georges Rigault described this book simply as "the work of a gentleman and a saint . . . a basic document of our history."

I

Les Règles de la Bienséance, first published in 1703, appeared during the sunset of the "Splendid Century" in France, the end of the 72-year reign of Louis XIV, and in "the midst of the crisis of the European conscience (1680–1715)" described by the historian and social commentator Paul Hazard in his classic work, *La Crise de la Conscience européenne*, published in 1934. Both the crisis, the effects of which are still felt today, and the refinement characteristic of the reign of the Sun King are reflected in this work of De La Salle, which provides an accurate, if small-scale, image of both.

According to Hazard, one of the most significant symptoms of this 35-year crisis of the European conscience was the disappearance of the "gentleman," the person of culture and refinement. It is neither out of place nor pretentious to consider De La Salle's book

* This introduction is in part adapted from the introduction to *Édition Critique des "Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne,"* by Brother Albert-Valentin, FSC (Paris, 1956).

a courageous effort to preserve and to perfect that type of human being by giving decorum and civility a religious motivation. Very early in the preface of *Les Règles de la Bienséance*, De La Salle notes “how little true Christianity is found in the world and how few among those who live in the world are guided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

De La Salle sought to revive the concept and the reality of the gentleman, the person who acts with decorum (*bienséance*), self-controlled modesty, and propriety, even when alone, and with civility (*civilité*), evangelical courtesy practiced in the presence of others. The many details of decorum and civility which De La Salle describes show that he is concerned with refinement in all its forms and that to make his point, he is willing and able to describe how the most common details of daily living ought to be carried out.

De La Salle’s efforts were directed originally to the working class and the poor, but they were eventually adopted by the *non-veaux riches*. His ideal—at once clear and uplifting—can be summarized as a simple and God-centered program to integrate the Gospel into all of life. The practices of decorum which he advocated he saw in the light of the spirit of faith, and those he condemned he saw as incompatible with Christian morality.

Hazard notes that when the Italian courtier disappeared as exemplar and guide, the French gentleman succeeded him as the model of good sense, perfectly adjusted to society. The ideal gentleman personified the acceptance of the existing religious, political, and social order and showed how all citizens could find their places without disorder and without revolution, so that all could be happy or, at least, contented. Although a mixture of many contrasts, the gentleman was so well adjusted that he represented a perfect harmony between common wisdom and social grace, between the needs of the soul and the demands of the body.

The gentleman lived politeness, refinement, and balance. He avoided all excess, even in doing good, and was never disturbed about anything except the possibility of losing honor. He trained himself through constant discipline and determined vigilance to excel at the difficult task of keeping himself under control. The gentleman, with a discreet heroism, controlled his inclinations and expressed himself only in harmony with the best of his society.

We find a portrait of this gentleman in most minute detail in rules of politeness set down by others besides De La Salle. However, De La Salle emphasized the Christian motivation and purpose

for the life of the gentleman, and he sought to restore the ideal of the gentleman to compatibility with a life of Christian faith. De La Salle's emphasis was in direct contrast to that of De Fontenelle, Bayle, Saint-Evremond, and other freethinkers, some of them his contemporaries, whose aim was to eliminate the supernatural completely and to follow only the light of reason proposed in the writings of Descartes.

De La Salle sought, instead, to limit the impact of rationalism on the Christian School, and he believed that a code of decorum and civility could be an excellent aid to the Christian educator involved in the work of preserving and fostering faith and morals in youth. He believed that although good manners were not always the expression of good morals, they could contribute strongly to building them. While he envisioned acts of decorum and civility as observing the established customs and thereby protecting the established social order, he envisioned them more profoundly as expressions of sincere charity. In this way the refinement of the gentleman would become a restraint on and an antidote to self-centeredness, the root of individual moral transgressions as well as the collective evil in human society.

How successful was De La Salle in achieving his goal, and what was the impact of his work? On this point the historian Georges Rigault suggests that the Christian who followed all the directives set down in *Les Règles de la Bienséance* would be well on his way to achieving the ideal of the gentleman. Even if that person lacked some of the social graces, he would not commit any grave faults or be guilty of any serious improprieties. Then Rigault adds:

During the eighteenth century, it was from this work of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, priest, doctor of theology, and Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, that the children of the people in France learned how to live as individuals who had a certain education and who took the Gospel to heart.

Roger Chartier, in *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton University Press, 1987), notes:

In point of fact, Jean-Baptiste de La Salle quite scrupulously respects the social differences that determine conduct. Appearance must indicate not only the divine part of man or of the qualities of his soul, but also his rank. . . . Even as they

claim to teach a modesty identified with the law of God and a sense of propriety that is sincerity and charity, La Salle's *Règles* are also a training in social order and an introduction to a world in which gestures of *civilité* are to express clearly understood social relations. It is not enough, then, to act in conformity with one's own condition; we must judge, in each situation, the respective social quality of other people, so that differences between them can be respected accurately.

. . . . Republished many times during the eighteenth century, these rules were perhaps one of the most efficacious agents for the implantation of elite models of comportment among the lower echelons of society. While they Christianized the foundations of *civilité*, the rules also offered to a large juvenile audience from many levels of society norms of conduct that were new, constraining, and demanding (pp. 90–91).

II

Les Règles de la Bienséance is also of interest as a Lasallian pedagogical document, because, in addition to being a book of politeness, it was intended to be a classroom reader used by children, and it reveals some of De La Salle's genius as an educator. According to Blain, an early biographer of De La Salle, it was "of all the writings of the holy priest . . . the one to which he gave the most care" (CL 8, 457).*

Contemporaries of De La Salle who wrote on politeness, with rare exceptions, showed little concern for the arrangement and the organization of their material. This disorganization usually diminished the usefulness of the text as a didactic work. De La Salle, however, paid much attention to the organization of his material.

* The *Cahiers lasalliens* (CL), an ongoing series of publications in French of studies, texts, and documents concerned with John Baptist de La Salle, his life, writings, and religious and pedagogical ideas, focus on the early decades of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the society that John Baptist de La Salle founded in 1680. They are published by Maison Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, 476 Via Aurelia, Rome.

In *Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes*, his principal work dealing with the theory and the practice of education, De La Salle gave the Brothers clear directions on teaching reading and on the particular texts to be used. A student was taught systematically, progressing from less difficult to more difficult readers, mastering each satisfactorily before going on to the next. Only the students on the sixth or seventh level, those proficient in reading French, were to use *Les Règles de la Bienséance*. Because these students were at the same time learning to read and to write manuscripts, this work was printed in a Gothic typeface, which is similar to handwriting and more difficult to read.

The historian and educator Ferdinand Buisson calls attention to other practices that show the value of the way *Les Règles de la Bienséance* was used as a reader.

De La Salle required the students to explain what they had read. He sought a reasonable method of instruction. . . . The teacher must have carefully read and studied in advance the material the students would be asked to read. . . . Above all he was to question the students to determine whether they could apply to themselves what they had read, something they could do only if they understood it.

Other features of *Les Règles de la Bienséance* that indicate De La Salle's practical knowledge of the way children learn are the detail and the repetition in the text, traits that would be tedious in a book intended only as a treatise on politeness.

III

In addition to its interest as a pedagogical work, *Les Règles de la Bienséance* is significant as a Lasallian document because of the light it sheds on De La Salle as a person of refinement, "a gentleman and a saint."

Les Règles de la Bienséance reveals De La Salle as a man of energy and virility. The practices he encourages require considerable discipline and self-denial, as well as a solid understanding of what is required if one is to be civil and refined. We can be certain that before he proposed these numerous rules to others, De La Salle had practiced them himself. He was born into a wealthy family with



a long tradition of refinement; he was not one of the *nouveaux riches*. He learned the rules of decorum and civility from his upbringing in a Christian family and from a disciplined education during his formative years. Having acquired a sense of refinement almost imperceptibly from his earliest years, he considered it to be inseparable from Christianity and was perfectly at ease in writing about it. So, while neither boasting of his background nor denying it, De La Salle could set forth the basic rules of propriety quite naturally. Further, a major guiding force in his life was the awareness of the presence of God, which led him to submit to what he perceived to be proper and right.

Les Règles de la Bienséance also reveals De La Salle's inner harmony. Undisturbed by undisciplined emotion and characterized by firmness joined to stability, De La Salle possessed the tranquility and evenness of disposition that he recommended to others. Throughout his book we see an admirable succession of observations and directives, all solidly based on a reasonable consideration of oneself and others.

Evident throughout the text is De La Salle's awareness that the rules of decorum are relative. He does not pretend to legislate for all ages or countries but only to provide a detailed and methodical code of conduct for civilized people living in France early in the eighteenth century. Many of the prescriptions, more suited to De La Salle's own era, have changed or disappeared altogether; others, based on reason or on charity, have relevance and value today.

De La Salle most often appears to be a balanced Christian humanist, but some of his condemnations and recommendations seem by modern standards to be excessive. He describes certain actions as "shameful," "very rude," or "uncouth," and he calls some practices "improper" or "entirely contrary to decorum." Yet, in the context of his time, De La Salle was not a rigorist. Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and even the gentle Fénelon, all contemporaries of De La Salle, wrote in a similar vein, and the Port Royalists were decidedly more strict.

While it is true that De La Salle at times denounces what we now view as trifles, at other times he shows himself humane, moderate, and sensitive. Without abandoning his principles, he can advise his readers to be aware of changes in fashion and to adjust to them in an appropriate way. He believes that people should not

blindly follow all the dictates of fashion, and he suggests that a refined person must know when and how to make reasonable adaptations. In all, De La Salle shows a good sense of what is proper for the Christian wishing to be in step with society in early eighteenth-century France.

For De La Salle the rules of decorum and civility are inspired by love of God and love of neighbor. What he writes in *Les Règles de la Bienséance* is a practical expression of a life lived in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. De La Salle tries to distinguish Christian politeness from what is purely worldly and natural. A comparison of this text with similar contemporary treatises reveals its uniqueness, for it proposes Christian love as the foundation of cultured refinement. In fact, De La Salle links some of his rules of decorum and civility directly with Holy Scripture and early Church writings.

De La Salle's early biographers did not make good use of *Les Règles de la Bienséance* when trying to understand De La Salle. As a book of politeness, it was considered only as an impersonal treatise intended for the use of students, not as a work that can enhance our perception of De La Salle as a person. This book is an integral part of De La Salle's writings, and even if it is not the same kind of work as, for example, his *Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison* or *Méditations pour tous les Dimanches de l'année*, it deserves to be studied by those who wish to understand De La Salle. In its own way, it reveals both the saint and the man.

Les Règles de la Bienséance shows De La Salle to have been very much the refined person of his time, deeply influenced by the dominant characteristics of his culture and his society, a good example of the person of decorum and civility as conceived by his contemporaries and as described in this text. It reveals De La Salle as a saintly gentleman, integrating in his own life the Gospel faith and the norms of society and culture.

IV

After an extensive study of books on politeness for children, Alcide Bonneau, a nineteenth-century scholar, declared that the true source of most of these books is a text by the sixteenth-century Dutch humanist, Erasmus. However, after seeking to establish a

direct connection between the work of Erasmus and that of De La Salle, Bonneau concludes, “The author of *Les Règles de la Bien-séance* does not seem to have made use of the text by Erasmus. His was an original work.”

Although Bonneau was not able to trace any of De La Salle’s ideas even indirectly to Erasmus, *Les Règles de la Bienséance* is not the original work Bonneau believed it to be. Recent research indicates that De La Salle relied extensively on several books published between 1649 and 1685. As was customary at the time, De La Salle does not identify the many direct quotations that he culled from his sources, but contemporary books on politeness were the source of almost all his material. It is in the adaptations and additions that he made to the borrowed material, and particularly in the motive that he provided for acting with refinement and civility, that De La Salle’s originality is revealed.

In his opening observations in the preface, De La Salle sets out the religious motivation that he proposes to the reader:

It is surprising that most Christians look upon decorum and politeness as merely human and worldly qualities and do not think of raising their minds to any higher views by considering them as virtues that have reference to God, to their neighbor, and to themselves. This illustrates very well how little true Christianity is found in the world and how few among those who live in the world are guided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Still, it is this Spirit alone which ought to inspire all our actions, making them holy and agreeable to God.

De La Salle insists that parents and teachers must teach the many details of politeness in a manner that will motivate children to be courteous and civil, not through worldly ambitions or fears but by an awareness of “the presence of God.” “In other words, children ought to do these things out of respect for God, in whose presence they are.”

When teaching children and training them to observe the practices of decorum that refer to their neighbor, teachers ought to urge them to show others the signs of consideration, honor, and respect appropriate to members of Jesus Christ and living temples of God, enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

De La Salle believed that Christians motivated by the awareness of the presence of God and acting out of respect for themselves and for others would “live like true Christians, for their exterior behavior will be conformable to that of Jesus Christ and will correspond with their Christian profession.”

Throughout the text, De La Salle also reinforces this motivation with citations from Holy Scripture and early Church writings.

De La Salle’s emphasis on living in the presence of God and on acting in view of God and in union with Jesus Christ gives *Les Règles de la Bienséance* a special quality and an originality that distinguish it from other works of the same genre and the same historical period.

V

The first edition of *Les Règles de la Bienséance* came off the press of Pierre Bourgoing in Troyes in 1703. It was a small book in octavo, with pages measuring about 10 by 16 centimeters (4 by 6 inches). It was printed in a Gothic typeface similar to handwriting, thus providing an additional challenge to students learning to read. On the average there were 29 lines of print on each page. The book contained 265 pages, of which 252 were the text proper. The remaining 13 pages comprised title page, preface, table of contents, and two pages carrying the King’s authorization to print and the equivalent of a *nihil obstat*, which affirmed the Church’s authorization.

The text itself was in two parts of unequal length. The shorter first part covered 48 pages divided into 14 chapters, many of which were only two or three pages long. The much longer second part contained 204 pages divided into 10 chapters. The longest chapters were divided into separate articles, two of which were subdivided into sections. This present translation retains the arrangement of the first edition.

Most eighteenth-century editions of *Les Règles de la Bienséance* that have survived include as part of the title the phrase, “for use in the Christian Schools for boys,” but in one of the earliest editions extant, we find the phrase, “for the use of the children in the Christian Schools.” *Les Règles de la Bienséance* was first published



in 1703, some 20 years after De La Salle began to involve himself in establishing schools for boys. However, prior to his work with boys and in carrying out the wishes of his dying friend Canon Roland, De La Salle had been associated for a short time with a community of Sisters who taught girls. He may, therefore, have recognized the benefits of having such a book for use by girls in the schools conducted by the Sisters. In 1722, at the request of Canon Roland's community of Sisters, a special edition appeared, designated "for use in the Christian Schools for girls." In that same year, the subtitle "for the use of youth" was added in the regular edition.

The editions of 1715 and 1716 add the following to the title: "very useful for the education of children and for people not familiar with either the current practices of politeness or the French language." It appears that in time De La Salle began to envision a readership more general than just boys in the Christian Schools. He makes allusion to clergy, religious, bourgeoisie, and nobility. Some references in the chapters dealing with meetings, conversations, and the writing of letters, as well as many other references throughout the book, seem to be addressed to readers who are not children. It is clear, then, that those for whom *Les Règles de la Bienséance* was intended came to include older youth and teachers within the educational system established by De La Salle, as well as girls in the schools of Sisters and older people in various walks of life desirous of knowing the proper rules of decorum and civility.

Les Règles de la Bienséance was frequently reprinted and regularly reedited during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and certainly it can be regarded as a best-seller, possibly among the most frequently reprinted and most extensively read books on politeness in the history of education. Between 1703 and 1730, there were at least six editions and numerous printings, with no less than three printings by 1719, the year De La Salle died. During the 145 years between 1730 and 1875, when the last edition appeared, the work went through 45 or more editions, with at least 120 additional reprintings. The revisions retained the religious element in the work and brought its directives up to date; however, its use as a classroom reader, one of De La Salle's initial purposes, declined.

De La Salle had, of course, no intention of imposing on posterity the rules of politeness of the Splendid Century. No doubt, he

would have been quite astonished if someone had told him that his work, which first appeared in 1703, would still be read in 1875. Perhaps it survived so long because, as Ferdinand Buisson notes,

It is a short work, flexible and without pretensions, and at times even naive, but admirably suited to those for whom it is written. It goes without saying that it is based on religion, but at the same time it contains some of the best lessons regarding human morality.

We might speculate upon another reason for the enduring popularity of *Les Règles de la Bienséance*. George Huppert, in *Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes* (1977), a study of the emergence of the monied class, or gentry, in sixteenth-century France, points out that social status could be achieved even then by earned and accumulated wealth, rather than merely by birth. But this new status, Huppert adds, demanded conformity to the traditional social codes of the upper classes and could easily be lost by those who did not know the rules of refinement. This attention to the traditional practices of decorum and civility to maintain social rank could have been an important reason for the continuing popularity of *Les Règles de la Bienséance*, which might, in fact, have become the *vade mecum* of the upwardly mobile.

Several copies of the editions published between 1703 and 1730 are preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris and in the Archives of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome. The following is a descriptive listing of these early editions.

First Edition. Troyes–Reims, 1703. On November 2, 1702, permission to print *Les Règles de la Bienséance* was requested. It was granted for five years in January 1703, with the first printing completed on February 15, 1703. The printer was probably Pierre Bourgoing of Troyes. It was not until May 1960 that a copy of this edition was discovered.*

* Alphonse Hermans, FSC (Maurice-Auguste), “Une œuvre du Saint Fondateur désormais mieux connue,” *Bulletin des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes*, 41 (October 1960): 198–204. An adaptation of this article appears in *Lasallian Digest*, 3, No. 2 (Winter, 1960): 65–73.



Rivière Edition. Paris, 1708–1709. On March 26, 1705, Antoine Chrétien of Paris obtained permission for five years to print a number of De La Salle's works, including *Les Règles de la Bien-séance*. No copies of this edition have yet been found. However, on May 10, 1708, another Parisian printer, Rivière, obtained permission for three years to reprint the Chrétien work. Several copies of this edition exist today in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris and in several other collections.

Besongne Edition. Rouen, 1715. On February 16, 1710, Jean-Baptiste Besongne of Rouen obtained permission for five years to print the book, based on a copy of the Rivière edition. One copy of this edition is in the Archives of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome. This copy provided the text that was included in *Édition Critique*, by Brother Albert-Valentin, FSC.

Oudot Edition. Troyes–Paris, 1716. On July 9, 1716, the widow Oudot received permission in Paris to print the work. Copies of this edition are preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and in the Archives of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome.

Regnauld Florentain Edition. Reims, 1722. This edition, revised for use in the Christian Schools for girls, was printed in 1722 with royal permission. Copies are preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.

Oursel Edition. Rouen, 1729. On February 9, 1726, Brother Timothée, then Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, received permission for three years to publish several works of De La Salle intended for use in the Christian Schools, among them *Les Règles de la Bien-séance*. Copies of this edition are found in the *Musée Pédagogique* in Paris and in the British Museum in London.

VI

The text which follows is the first complete translation into English of the Troyes–Reims first edition of 1703, which is reproduced in volume 19 of *Cahiers lasalliens*. (*Édition Critique*, by Brother Albert-Valentin, FSC, is based on the edition of 1715.) In addition to striving for accuracy, this translation also attempts to resolve two special

problems. The first arises from the fact that De La Salle uses several key words repeatedly, relying on context to focus the meaning. *Bien-séance*, for example, and two other words from the same root are used 300 times in the affirmative and another 70 times in the negative. *Civil* and *civilité* are used 45 times, and their negatives, over 120 times. There are about 30 similar cases of the repeated use of a specific word. In this translation a recurring French word has been translated, as often as possible, by the same English word, with some variation necessitated by the context. Thus *bien-séance* is always translated as “decorum,” while “appropriate” is used for other words with the same root. “Civility,” “polite,” and “politeness” are used for the *civil* group; “rude,” “impolite,” “uncivil,” “uncivilized,” and “uncouth,” for its negative. “Courteous” and “refined” translate words of the *bonnête* group.

The second problem is the translation of the impersonal French pronoun *on* (“he,” “one,” “you”). In this text *on* is nearly always translated as “you.” This, better than the pronoun “he” or “one,” carries the direct, personal tone in which De La Salle expresses these rules of refinement; in addition, “you” helps address the issue of inclusive language. Some masculine forms have been retained, however, to avoid awkward paraphrases and to reflect the fact that this is an eighteenth-century book written originally for boys in elementary school.

Gregory Wright, FSC

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Gregory Wright, FSC

**The Rules of
Christian Decorum
and Civility**

In Two Parts

For Use in the Christian Schools

1703

Preface

It is surprising that most Christians look upon decorum and politeness as merely human and worldly qualities and do not think of raising their minds to any higher views by considering them as virtues that have reference to God, to their neighbor, and to themselves. This illustrates very well how little true Christianity is found in the world and how few among those who live in the world are guided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Gal 5:10).^{*} Still, it is this Spirit alone which ought to inspire all our actions, making them holy and agreeable to God. This is an obligation Saint Paul points out to us when he tells us in the person of the early Christians that because we ought to live by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we must also act in all things by that Spirit (Gal 5:2 v. 5 [5:25]).

According to the same Apostle, because all our actions ought to be holy, there are none that ought not to be done through purely Christian motives. Thus, all our external actions, which are the only ones that can be guided by the rules of decorum, must always, through faith, possess and display the characteristics of virtue.

This is something to which fathers and mothers ought to pay attention while educating their children. It is likewise something about which teachers, entrusted with the instruction of these children, must be especially concerned.

Parents and teachers ought never to fail, while teaching children the rules of decorum, to remind them that they ought to observe these only through purely Christian motives, which concern the glory of God and one's own salvation. Parents and teachers ought to avoid telling the children in their care that if they fail to act in a certain way, people will blame them, will not have any respect for them, or will ridicule them. Such remarks can only inspire children with the spirit of the world and turn them away from the spirit of the Gospel. Rather, when they wish to train children in practices pertaining to bodily care and simple modesty, they ought to lead them

^{*} This and the following references, which appear in the margin of the 1703 manuscript, are incorporated into the text. Corrected and adjusted references, using the *New American Bible* (or the Douay, where noted) appear in brackets throughout this translation.

carefully to be motivated by the presence of God, as Saint Paul does when he makes the same point with the faithful of his time, saying that their modesty ought to be known to all, because the Lord is near to them. In other words, children ought to do these things out of respect for God, in whose presence they are. When teaching children and training them to observe the practices of decorum that refer to their neighbor, teachers must urge them to show others the signs of consideration, honor, and respect appropriate to members of Jesus Christ and living temples of God, enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, Saint Peter exhorts the early faithful to love their brethren and to pay to all the honor due to them, thereby showing themselves true servants of God and making known in this way that they honor God in the person of their neighbor.

If all Christians make it a practice to display goodwill, esteem, and respect for others from considerations of this kind only and from motives of this nature, they will sanctify all their actions and make it possible to distinguish, as ought to be possible, between Christian decorum and civility and what is merely worldly or almost pagan. Thus they will live like true Christians, for their exterior behavior will be conformable to that of Jesus Christ and will correspond with their Christian profession. They will thereby show themselves to be different from infidels and from those who are Christians only in name, as Tertullian remarks when he says that in his time people could know and recognize Christians by their exterior conduct and their modesty.

Christian decorum is, then, that wise and well-regulated conduct which governs what we do and say. It arises from sentiments of modesty, respect, union, and charity toward our neighbor. It leads us to give due regard to proper times and places and to the people with whom we have to deal. Decorum practiced toward our neighbor is properly called civility.

In the practices of decorum and civility, we must give due consideration to the times in which we are living, because there are many practices which were in use in past centuries, or even in rather recent years, which are not now accepted, and whoever follows these will be considered eccentric and far from being regarded as a polite and courteous person.

It is also necessary to conduct ourselves in matters of decorum according to what is acceptable in the country where we live

or where we happen to be, for each nation has its own particular customs of decorum and civility. It happens often enough that what is considered improper in one country is regarded as polite and courteous in another.

It is the same thing regarding matters which decorum requires in certain special places but which are entirely forbidden in others. What must be observed in the presence of the king or in the royal apartments must not be done elsewhere, because the respect we must have for the person of the king demands that certain signs of reverence be shown when in his house that would be out of place in a private home.

We ought to act in our own home differently from the way we act in the homes of others, and so too in homes of people whom we know as opposed to those whom we scarcely know.

Because politeness expects us to have and to show special respect for certain people that we do not owe to others and because it would also violate decorum to show the same kind of respect to everyone, whenever we meet or converse with a person of some social standing, we must pay attention to his rank, dealing with and treating him according to what the rank calls for.

We must likewise consider ourselves and who we are, for whoever is inferior to others is obliged to show submission to those who are superiors, whether by birth, by official position, or by social rank. We ought to pay them much greater respect than we would to someone who is our equal.

A peasant, for example, ought to show more respect for a lord than would a working man who does not depend upon that lord. Similarly, a working man ought to show greater respect for a lord than would a gentleman who happens to be visiting that lord.

Strictly speaking, decorum and civility consist only in the practices of modesty and of respect for our neighbor. Modesty is especially shown in our deportment, and respect for our neighbor is shown in the ordinary acts that we usually perform in the presence of others; therefore, in this book we will treat these two separately. In the first part, we examine the modesty that must be shown in the deportment and the care of the body and of the various parts of the body. In the second part, we examine the external marks of respect or special consideration that must be manifested in the various actions of life with regard to all the people in whose presence we may be and with whom we may have to deal.

Part One

**The Modesty You Must Show
in Your Deportment and in the Care
of the Various Parts of Your Body**

1

Deportment and Care of Your Body

If you wish to have a distinguished appearance and to be esteemed because of the modesty that marks you as a wise and well-behaved person, you must learn to control your body in the way prescribed by nature or by custom.

You must avoid, for this reason, several defects in the way you carry yourself. The first of these defects, which is an affectation and a constraint, makes you appear awkward. This is entirely opposed to decorum and to the norms of modesty.

You must also avoid the kind of negligent attitude that betrays slovenliness and indolence in your conduct and that would expose you to contempt, because it indicates a meanness of spirit as well as low birth and poor education.

You ought also to be very careful not to let anything flighty appear in your bearing, for this might indicate that you are frivolous. If your mind is naturally flighty and heedless and if you wish to avoid falling into this defect or to correct yourself of it, you must pay attention not to move a single part of your body without attention to what you are doing and to move only with due restraint. If your temperament is fiery and hasty, you must watch over yourself carefully. Never act without great moderation. Always think before doing anything, and keep your body as much as possible tranquil and steady.

Although you ought not to cultivate any artificial poses, you must, nonetheless, learn to control all your movements and to regulate properly the deportment of all parts of your body. This is something that must be carefully taught to children. People whose parents were so negligent as not to have trained them from their earliest years must still apply themselves in a special way until they have mastered these habits and they have become easy and almost natural.

In a person's deportment, there must always be something sedate, even majestic. You ought to take care, however, that there is nothing in this to suggest pride or arrogance of spirit, for such attitudes greatly displease everyone. What will produce this sedateness is the simple modesty and wisdom that as a Christian

you display in all your conduct. You are truly of noble birth, for you belong to Jesus Christ and are a child of God, the Supreme Being. Hence, in your exterior there ought to be nothing vulgar. Everything in you ought to denote a certain air of nobility and greatness, a reflection of the power and majesty of God, whom you serve and who gave you being. This dignified appearance ought not to flow from arrogance or lead you to prefer yourself to others. Every Christian wishing to act according to the laws of the Gospel ought to show honor and respect to all others, considering them as children of God and brothers of Jesus Christ and himself as one burdened with sin for which he must constantly humble himself, placing himself beneath everyone else.

When standing, you must hold your body erect, without leaning to one side or the other. Do not bend forward, like an old man who no longer can hold his body erect. It is also very unbecoming to assume a haughty posture, to lean against a wall or anything else, to make bodily contortions, or to lounge about in an unseemly manner.

When seated, do not sprawl out in a slovenly way or lean too noticeably against the back of your chair. It is unbecoming to be seated in a chair that is too low or too high, unless you cannot do otherwise. Ordinarily, it is better to be seated too high than too low; however, in company you must always make it a special point to give women the lower chairs, for they are usually more comfortable.

Neither cold weather nor any other type of pain or discomfort ought to induce you to assume an unbecoming posture. It is also against decorum to show in your demeanor that you are suffering from something uncomfortable, unless you cannot do otherwise.

It is a sign of exaggerated fastidiousness and delicacy if you cannot endure the least disagreeable thing without showing it exteriorly.

2

The Head and Ears

To hold your head in a proper manner, keep it erect without bending it forward or letting it lean to the right or to the left. You must be especially careful not to hunch your shoulders or to turn your head repeatedly from side to side, for this indicates a flighty mind. Furthermore, making frequent gestures with your head is the sign of a disturbed and confused person. It is also a sign of arrogance if you hold your head in an affected manner. It is entirely against the respect due to another person to lift your head high, to shake it, or to wag it from side to side while someone is speaking to you. This indicates that you are not showing the respect the speaker deserves and that you are not prepared to believe or to do what you are being told.

A liberty you must never allow yourself is to support your head on your hands, as if you could not otherwise sustain its weight.

To scratch your head while speaking or, when in company, even while not speaking is unbecoming and unworthy of a person who has been well brought up. It is also a sign of great negligence and lack of cleanliness, because such behavior ordinarily happens when you have neglected to comb your hair and have failed to keep your head clean. These are things that ought to be attended to by any person who does not wear a wig. Such people must be very careful not to leave any dirt or greasy spots on their hair, for only people poorly brought up fall into such negligent ways. You ought to consider the cleanliness of the body, especially of the head, as an outward mark and indication of the soul's purity.

Because modesty and refinement require that you not let your ears become full of dirt, from time to time you must clean them with a specially designed instrument called an ear swab. It is extremely unbecoming to use your fingers, or even a pin, for this purpose, and it is against the respect you ought to have for the people you are with to do so in their presence. It is also contrary to the respect you owe if you are in a holy place.

It is not appropriate to wear a feather behind your ear, to put flowers in your ear, or to have pierced ears with earrings. This

is most inappropriate for a man because it is a sign of slavery, which is not at all becoming.

The most beautiful finery for your ears is to keep them unadorned and clean. Ordinarily, men keep their ears covered by their hair, while women more frequently have their ears uncovered. It is sometimes the custom, particularly for women of rank, to wear earrings of pearls, diamonds, or other precious stones. It is, however, more modest and more Christian not to have any accessories attached to your ears, because it is through them that God's word reaches the mind and the heart. The respect you must profess for that divine word ought to lead you to avoid anything that suggests vanity.

The finest adornment for the ears of a Christian is that they be well disposed and ever ready to hear attentively and to receive submissively any instructions concerning religion and the maxims of the holy Gospel. It was for this reason that the laws of the Church bade all ecclesiastics to keep their ears entirely uncovered, thus giving them to understand that they must always be attentive to God's law, to the doctrine of truth, and to the science of salvation, of which they are the repositories and the dispensers.

3

The Hair

You must not fail to adopt faithfully the rule and the practice of combing your hair daily. You must never appear before anyone at all with tangled and dirty hair. Take particular care that the hair is free of lice or nits. This precaution is especially important for children.

Although it is not advisable to use much powder on your hair, for this suggests effeminacy, you must, however, avoid leaving your hair greasy. If your hair is naturally oily, you can use some bran to remove the excess oil, or you can comb your hair with a little powder on the comb to dry off some of the oil. This will also remove the natural dampness that can soil your linen and clothing.

It is highly unbecoming to comb your hair in public, but the offense becomes intolerable if you do so in church, the one place where you must be neat and clean out of the respect you have toward God. This respect makes it imperative that you be already very clean when you enter the church.

While Saint Peter and Saint Paul forbid women to curl their hair, they condemn with even greater reason this sort of behavior in men, who, having naturally far less inclination than women to such vanities, ought to reject them all the more resolutely and be much less inclined to yield to them.

Just as it is improper to wear your hair too short, which would contribute to disfiguring your appearance, it is also inadvisable to wear it too long. In particular, it must not hang over your eyes; therefore, it is good to trim your hair neatly from time to time.

Some people, for their own convenience, when they feel too hot or when they have something to do, push their hair behind their ears or under their hat. This is very rude. You must always let your hair hang down naturally. Self-control and refinement also require you not to touch your hair unnecessarily. The respect due to others demands that you do not put your hand on your hair in their presence.

You must, therefore, avoid smoothing your hair by repeatedly pressing down on it with the palm of your hand. You must

not allow the strands of hair to spread loosely, curl them with your finger on either side, run your fingers through your hair, as if combing it, or shake out your hair by tossing your head. All these are ways of acting that people adopt for convenience or simply through a lack of manners but that refinement, self-control, and respect for others do not permit.

Because it is an even greater violation of decorum to have a wig poorly combed than to have your hair poorly combed, people who wear a wig must take particular care to keep it clean, for the hair used to make wigs lacks natural consistency and must be combed and arranged more carefully than natural hair.

A wig is much more fitting and appropriate for a man when it matches the color of his own hair rather than if it is a lighter or a darker shade. Some men, however, wear wigs so curled and of such a light blond color that they seem more appropriate for women than for men.

Although you must not altogether neglect these kinds of adornments when they are in common use, it is against decorum and good judgment for a man to spend much time or to go to great lengths to keep them neat and closely fitted.

4

The Face

The Wise Man says that by the look on his face, you can tell a person of good judgment (Eccl [Sir] 19). By their facial expressions, people ought to show that they are agreeable; at the same time, their exterior appearance edifies their neighbor.

To be agreeable to others, do not assume a stern or a forbidding countenance or let anything unsociable or shocking appear or anything too giddy or resembling a schoolboy. The whole face ought to reflect an air of seriousness and wisdom. Nor is it according to decorum to have a melancholy or a peevish countenance, and your face ought never to reflect any passion or ill-regulated affection.

Your face ought to be happy, with no sign of either intemperance or dissipation. It ought to be serene but not too easygoing; open, without giving signs of too great a familiarity; gentle, without softness, and never suggesting anything vulgar. To everyone it must manifest your respect or, at the least, your affection and goodwill.

It is, however, proper to allow the expression on your face to reflect the various business matters and circumstances that arise. Because you ought to sympathize with your neighbors and show by your appearance that you share what afflicts them, you must not put on a happy and cheerful countenance when a person brings sad news or when a misfortune has befallen someone, nor must you exhibit a somber countenance when something agreeable is said or a happy event has occurred.

In your own concerns, as a person of good judgment, always try to be even-tempered and to display a serene countenance. Just as adversity ought not to cast you into dejection, prosperity must not make you unduly elated. Maintain a tranquil countenance that does not readily change its disposition or expression, no matter what happens, agreeable or disagreeable.

People whose countenance changes at every occasion that comes along are most disagreeable; it is hard to put up with them. Sometimes they appear with a happy look on the face, sometimes with a melancholy air and countenance. Sometimes they show

plainly that they are upset; sometimes, that they are in a great hurry. All this serves to reveal a person who has little virtue and who does not strive to keep his passions in check. This way of acting is entirely human and natural and shows little of the Christian spirit.

Do not adopt too happy and easygoing a countenance in your dealings with people in general.

Refinement demands that you show on your countenance a great deal of circumspection when you find yourself with people to whom great respect is due. It is always a sign of decorum to take on an air both serious and grave in their presence. It is also prudent not to have too open an expression on your face when dealing with inferiors, especially servants. You are obliged to treat them with kindness and consideration, but it is also important not to be familiar with them.

Toward people with whom you are more at ease and whom you meet regularly, it is proper to show a happy countenance in order to add greater ease and pleasure to the conversation.

Neatness demands that you wipe your face every morning with a white cloth in order to clean it. It is not good to wash with water, for this makes the countenance more sensitive to the cold in winter and to sunburn in summer.

You would be lacking in refinement to rub or to touch any part of your face with your bare hands, especially when there is no need to do so. If it does become necessary to remove some dirt, do so gently with a fingertip. If you are obliged to wipe your face in very hot weather, use a handkerchief for this purpose, and do not rub too hard or with both hands.

It is a lack of decorum to allow any filth or dirt to remain on your face, but you must never clean your face in the presence of others. If it happens that you notice something of this sort when you are already in company, as you remove it, cover your face somewhat with your hat.

It is something very improper, something that shows great vanity and is not at all becoming in a Christian, to apply beauty spots and paint to your face, covering it with powder and rouge.

5

The Forehead, Eyebrows, and Cheeks

It is very unbecoming to show a wrinkled forehead, which is ordinarily the sign of a disturbed and melancholy mind. Take care not to let anything harsh be seen in your appearance; instead, you ought to manifest wisdom, kindness, and goodwill.

Respect for others does not allow you, when speaking about people, to tap your forehead with your fingertip, to indicate that others are stubbornly attached to their way of thinking and their own judgment, or to tap with a bent knuckle on someone's forehead to show that you think the same thing of him.

It would show unbecoming familiarity for two people to rub or bump foreheads, even in jest; this is something not at all becoming to reasonable people.

It is impolite to knit your eyebrows; this is a sign of haughtiness. Instead, you ought to keep your brows relaxed all the time. To raise them indicates scorn, and to let them droop over the eyes is characteristic of the melancholy person. It is not proper to have your eyebrows trimmed very short. It is in conformity with decorum to let them cover all the skin above the eyes and to let them appear rather prominently.

The finest ornament of the cheeks is a modest reserve, which makes wellborn people blush when an indecent word, a lie, or a slander is uttered in their presence. In fact, only brazen and shameless people can tell lies with ease or say or do something unseemly without blushing.

It is unbecoming to move your cheeks in an exaggerated way or to let them sag; even worse, to puff them out, for this is the effect either of arrogance or of some very violent surge of anger.

When you eat, take care that you do so in such a way that you do not allow your cheeks to fill out. It is extremely unrefined and unbecoming to keep both cheeks full of food. This is a sign, when it happens, that you are eating voraciously, the effect of gluttony completely out of control.

You must never touch your own cheeks or those of someone else, even if this is done out of flattery. You must never pinch

anyone, no matter who it may be, not even a child; that would be most ill-mannered, nor ought you to take the liberty of touching someone on the cheek, even as a joke or in jest. All such mannerisms are unbecoming familiarities, which are never permitted.

To slap a person's cheek is to give him a grave insult. In the world it is considered an intolerable affront. The Gospel urges us to endure this and suggests that Christians who seek to imitate Jesus Christ in his patience ought to be willing, even ready, to turn the other cheek and to receive another blow after having been struck. It forbids us to strike first; only some violent rage or a feeling of vengeance would lead us to do that.

As a person of good judgment, you must never raise your hand to strike another on the cheek; decorum and propriety never allow this, not even toward a servant.

6

The Eyes and Glances

We often know, says the Wise Man, what is in the depths of the soul by observing what appears in the eyes (Eccl [Sir] 19). We can also discern good or evil dispositions, and even though we cannot be absolutely sure of this all the time, it is, nevertheless, a fairly common sign. Thus, one of the first things you must attend to in your exterior deportment is to keep control over your eyes and to regulate your glances.

If you wish to be considered a person of humility and moderation and to appear wise and composed, you must try to keep your eyes calm, peaceful, and controlled.

Those whom nature has not blessed with these qualities and who lack this disposition must strive to correct the deficiency by cultivating a happy, modest countenance. They must avoid making their eyes even more disagreeable through negligence.

Some people have frightening eyes that betray an enraged or violent temper. Others always keep their eyes wide open and look around everywhere brazenly; this defect is found ordinarily in impudent people, who show no respect for anyone.

There are some people whose eyes wander constantly, looking here, looking there; this indicates a giddy mind.

There are also some who stare so fixedly at an object that it seems that they would like to devour it. Yet it frequently happens that people of this kind pay not the least attention to objects in front of them. These are usually people who are preoccupied by something dear to their heart or whose minds wander readily, never coming to focus on anything definite.

Other people look fixedly at the ground, sometimes casting glances to the right or to the left as though looking for something they had lost. These restless and disturbed people do not know what to do to overcome their anxiety.

All these ways of looking at things are entirely contrary to decorum and refinement. The first step to correct these defects is to hold your body and head erect and to keep your eyes modestly cast down, while striving to cultivate a free and cordial manner.

Just as it is inappropriate to let your gaze roam skyward, neither is it proper, if you live in the world, to keep your eyes habitually cast down, something more fitting for religious than for laypeople. Nevertheless, ecclesiastics and those who aspire to the clerical state in life ought to appear in public showing great restraint in their eyes and in their whole exterior. It is part of decorum that those who are clerics or who intend to become such accustom themselves to mortify their senses and to make known by their modesty that being consecrated to God or wishing to be, they have their minds on God and on what concerns God.

A good rule to adopt regarding your eyes is to keep them moderately open and to look straight ahead, so that you can distinctly and easily see all the people with whom you are. Do not, however, stare fixedly at anyone, especially people of the opposite sex or of a higher rank. If it is proper to look at someone, do so in a natural manner, gently and decently, so that no one can recognize in your glance any ill-regulated passion or affection.

It is most impolite for you to scowl at anyone, for this is a sign of contempt, something which, at best, can be allowed to masters regarding their servants in order to reprove them for some gross blunder they might have committed. It is also uncouth to shift your gaze constantly or to blink repeatedly, which suggests limited intelligence.

It is no less contrary to decorum than to piety to glance lightly and curiously at everything that comes along or to stare at things a great distance away. Instead, look only directly ahead without turning either your head or your eyes from side to side. Because the mind is naturally inclined to want to see everything and to know everything, it is necessary to watch over yourself and to refrain from these mannerisms. Often address God in these words of the Royal Prophet: My God, turn my eyes aside, and let them not rest on useless things (Ps 118n [119]:37).

It is most impolite to look over your shoulder and to turn your head while speaking to someone; this shows disrespect for those you are with. It is also very impolite to peer from behind and over the shoulder of a person who is reading or holding some object, in order to see what is being read or held.

Some defects regarding the use of the eyes imply so much vulgarity or such thoughtlessness that ordinarily only children or schoolboys commit them. However shocking such defects are, it

ought to surprise no one that they are mentioned here, so that students can guard against them and others can watch over children to prevent them from falling into these defects.

Some children make faces or bulge out their eyes to make themselves look horrible. To make their companions laugh, other children imitate squint-eyed people or those who are cross-eyed. Sometimes you can find boys who rub their eyes with their fingers; others keep one eye shut, like a marksman aiming at a target. All these ways of using your eyes are entirely impolite and rude. No reasonable people, no wellborn children, would fail to consider all such behavior as unworthy of people of good judgment.

7

The Nose and the Manner of Blowing Your Nose and Sneezing

It is unbecoming to wrinkle your nose, for this is something that scoffers do. It is also rude and impolite to twitch your nose; do not even touch it with either the palm of your hand or your bare fingers.

It is required by decorum that you keep your nose very clean; it is disgusting to let it get filled with mucus. Therefore, you must clean it often to keep it properly clean, for your nose is the honor and the beauty of your face and its most prominent part.

It is very rude to pick constantly at your nose with your fingers. It is even worse to put into your mouth what you have extracted from your nose or to put your fingers into your mouth after you have picked your nose. This is enough to turn the stomach of those who witness it.

It is disgusting to blow your nose into an open hand placed under your nose or to blow it on your sleeve or on other parts of your clothing. It is very much against decorum to blow your nose with two fingers, to let the mucus fall to the ground, and then to wipe your fingers on your clothes. Everyone knows how repulsive it is to see such filth on people's clothes, which ought always to be very clean, no matter how poor they might be, for they are the ornaments of a servant of God and a member of Jesus Christ.

There are some people who put their finger against one nostril and then, by blowing hard through the other nostril, try to expel to the ground the dirt that is in it. People guilty of such behavior simply do not know what refinement is.

You must always use a handkerchief, never anything else, when blowing your nose. When doing this, ordinarily use your hat to cover your face, or if few people are present and you can easily turn your face from their view, do so, and blow your nose away from their presence.

When blowing your nose, avoid making a lot of noise by blowing too hard or by snorting. All this is very uncouth.

When you are at table, it is proper to use your napkin to cover your nose as much as possible, for it is lacking in decorum to blow your nose without covering it.

Before blowing your nose, it is unbecoming to take a long time drawing out your handkerchief, and it would show a lack of respect for the people present to unfold different parts to see which you will use. Take your handkerchief out of your pocket, and use it promptly in such a way that hardly anyone notices.

Take care after blowing your nose that you do not look into your handkerchief. Instead, it is proper to fold it up again right away and put it back into your pocket.

It is not refined to keep your handkerchief in your hand or to offer it to someone else, even if it is very clean. However, if someone asks for it and insists, you may hand it to him.

When you are about to sneeze, do not try to prevent it, but it is proper to turn your face slightly to the side while covering it with your handkerchief. Then sneeze as gently and with as little noise as possible. Finally, courteously thank the others present for their signs of goodwill by making them a slight bow.

When someone else sneezes, do not say aloud, "God bless you," or, "God help you." Merely take your hat off, and without speaking, make a slight bow, a deep one if it is a person to whom great respect is due.

It is a rather general custom to take snuff. It is, however, far better not to do so at all, especially when in company. You must never do it when with people to whom you owe great respect. It is very unbecoming to chew tobacco or to insert it into your nose; equally so, to smoke tobacco in a pipe. This is absolutely intolerable in the presence of women.

If a person of high rank takes snuff in the presence of others and offers them some, the respect they must have for him ought to dissuade them from refusing. If it is repugnant for you to put it in your nose, simply pretend to do so.

Although the habit of using snuff can be permitted for men, for it is tolerated by custom, it must not be done in the presence of women. It is entirely against decorum for women to use snuff.

It is also unbecoming for those who use snuff to keep a handkerchief constantly in hand and to let everyone see a handkerchief full of stains and tobacco; however, this will almost always happen when people use snuff often.

If you take snuff in company, do so rarely, and do not constantly have your snuffbox in your hand and your hand stained by tobacco. You must take care that snuff does not fall on your undergarments or outer clothing, because it is not refined that others be able to notice it. So that this does not happen, take only a little at a time.

8

The Mouth, Lips, Teeth, and Tongue

Do not keep your mouth either too widely open or too firmly shut. When eating, do not have your mouth full; rather, eat with such moderation that you will be ready to speak easily and will be understood distinctly when the occasion presents itself.

Refinement requires that your mouth always be clean, and for this purpose it is proper that you wash it out every morning. It is not courteous, however, to do this at table or in the presence of others.

Decorum does not allow you to keep anything in your mouth or to hold anything between your lips or teeth. This is why you must not put a pen in your mouth when you are writing or flowers in your mouth under any circumstances.

It is uncouth to keep your lips too tightly shut, to bite them, or to keep them half open. It is intolerable to pout or to make a face. What you must try to achieve is to keep your lips together, lightly and without constraint.

It is against decorum to let your lips quiver when speaking or on any other occasion. Always keep them closed; ordinarily you ought to move them only when speaking or eating.

There are some people who raise their upper lip so high or let the lower lip sag so much that their teeth are almost entirely visible. This is entirely contrary to decorum, which forbids you to allow your teeth to be uncovered, for nature gave us lips to conceal them.

You must always keep your teeth very clean, for it is most unpleasant to see black, stained teeth or teeth with foreign matter on them. Therefore, clean your teeth from time to time, especially in the morning after eating. This, however, must not be done at table in the presence of others, which would show a lack of refinement and respect.

You must guard against using your nails, your fingers, or a knife to clean your teeth. Decorum requires that for this purpose you use a special instrument called a toothpick, a bit of quill especially cut for this purpose, or even a coarse string.

It is a sign that you know nothing about refinement if you grind your teeth or click them. Do not keep them too tightly shut when speaking or speak between them. This is a fault you must earnestly strive to correct by opening your mouth properly when speaking to anyone.

It is very impolite to snap your thumbnail against a front tooth as a gesture of disdain and contempt for someone or something. It is far worse to do this while saying, "I couldn't care less than *that* about it!"

It would be something shameful and unworthy of a wellborn person for you to stick out your tongue at someone to show contempt or as a sign of refusing what the other person has requested. It is rude to move your tongue to the edge of your lips and then to slide it from side to side. It is no less impolite to slip your tongue or the lower lip over the upper lip to suck into your mouth a drop of liquid or matter that has fallen from your nose. It would be good for those who are so badly brought up that they fall into faults like these to look into the mirror to correct themselves, for they certainly could not see themselves doing such repulsive things without condemning them.

Decorum, then, requires you to keep your tongue always in your mouth and never to let it stick out, for teeth are an enclosure that nature has given us for this purpose.

9

Speech and Pronunciation

Because speech is formed by your mouth, lips, tongue, and teeth, it would seem that this is the place to mention it.

To speak well and to be understood by others, you must open your mouth wide and take care not to speak too fast or to say a single word heedlessly and frivolously, because this prevents people, especially those who are active by temperament, from pronouncing well.

In speaking, make it a point to use a gentle and relaxed tone of voice, loud enough to be heard by those to whom you speak, for we speak only to be understood. It is not polite, however, to talk too loudly or to shout as though speaking to deaf people.

One thing you must be careful about when speaking is not to let anything harsh, bitter, or disdainful creep into your voice, no matter to whom you are speaking. You must always speak with refinement and goodwill.

Speaking through your nose is ridiculous. Although this might be caused by illness, make sure that your nose is not stopped up and that it is kept clean and free from obstructions.

Those who have a heavy tongue and who wish to correct this condition must learn to strengthen their voice by taking pains to stress the letters or syllables that they are not able to pronounce. This will make enunciation easier for them.

It is important to make the effort to correct such defects at an early age, because such habits are almost impossible to overcome later on, once you have developed your own way of speaking. Even if you realize when you are older that this way of talking is improper and disagreeable, you will find it impossible to get rid of it and to change.

It is unbecoming to talk to yourself. This is something you must seldom do, for it would mark you as irrational, as lacking in good sense, or as someone scheming and hatching a plot and trying to figure out how to do it.

Something most important to observe when you speak is to sound all the letters and syllables and to pronounce all the words distinctly, one after the other. Take care that you do not neglect to pronounce the final consonant when the word is followed by

another one that begins with a vowel; however, do not pronounce the final consonant when the first letter of the next word is a consonant.

Two defects are to be avoided in pronunciation. One has to do with the pronunciation itself, and the other refers to the manner of enunciating.

As to pronunciation in ordinary conversation, it ought to be even and uniform. Do not change your tone of voice at every moment, as a preacher might do. The tone must always be firm, so that you do not drop your voice at the end of a word. Instead, strive to bring out the ending of words and sentences more distinctly than the beginning, so that you can always be well understood. Pronunciation must also be complete; do not omit or slur any letter or syllable, so that you pronounce everything well. Finally, your pronunciation must be so precise that one letter is not mistaken for another.

There are several improper ways of enunciating. Some people speak in a slow, slurred, and listless manner. Such speakers are very disagreeable to listen to; they always seem to be complaining about something when they speak. This kind of enunciation indicates great slovenliness and laxity of conduct. The defect is more common and also more tolerable in women than in men, but everyone ought to try to avoid it.

There are other people whose pronunciation of words is clumsy and harsh, in the manner common among peasants. They can correct themselves of this defect only by softening their tone of voice and by not stressing words and syllables so strongly.

There are some people whose way of enunciating is hard and brusque; this manner of speaking is very rude. To overcome this defect, always speak gently, paying attention to yourself and showing much kindness for others.

Others speak in a shrill and hurried manner. You can change this by always taking a firm tone of voice and striving to enunciate all the syllables distinctly and attentively.

French enunciation must be at once clear, gentle, and pleasant. To learn how to enunciate well, you ought to begin by speaking little, saying all the words one after another at a moderate pace, enunciating all syllables and all words distinctly. It is especially useful to converse ordinarily only with people who speak well and enunciate properly.

10

Yawning, Spitting, and Coughing

Decorum requires you to refrain from yawning when with others, especially when with people to whom you owe respect. Yawning is a sign that you are bored either with the company or with the talk of your companions or that you have very little esteem for them. If, however, you find that you cannot help yawning, stop talking entirely, hold your hand or your handkerchief in front of your mouth, and turn slightly aside, so that those present cannot notice what you are doing. Above all, take care when yawning not to do anything unbecoming and not to yawn too much. It is very unseemly to make noise while yawning and much worse to yawn while stretching or sprawling out.

You need not refrain entirely from spitting. It is a very disgusting thing to swallow what you ought to spit out; it can make you nauseated. Do not, however, make a habit of spitting often and without necessity. This is not only uncouth but also disgusting and disagreeable to everyone. Take care that you rarely need to do this in company, especially with people to whom special respect is due.

It is necessary when you are with people of rank and in places that are usually kept clean that you turn aside slightly and spit into your handkerchief.

It would also conform to decorum if a person had the practice of spitting into a handkerchief when in the house of important people and in a place where floors are waxed or parquetry. It is even more necessary to do this when in church. The respect that you must have for places consecrated to God and set aside for rendering God the worship due to him demands that they be kept very clean and that you respect them, including the floor on which you walk. Still, it often happens that no kitchen or stable floor is dirtier than that of the church, even though the church is the house and the dwelling place of God on earth.

After spitting into your handkerchief, fold it immediately without looking at it, and replace it in your pocket.

It is extremely rude to spit out of a window, into the fire, on the burning logs, against the hearth, or against the wall or in any

place where the spittle cannot be stepped on. It is also against decorum to spit in front of you while with others or to spit too far, so that you have to go looking for the spittle in order to step on it.

You must take great care never to spit on your clothes or on those of others. To do that would be very dirty and careless.

Another defect no less serious and against which you must be on your guard when talking is spraying saliva on the faces of those to whom you are speaking. This is extremely unbecoming and highly disagreeable to others.

If you see a large glob of spittle on the ground, immediately step on it unobtrusively. If you notice some on a person's clothes, it is against decorum to call attention to it. Instead, tell a servant to remove it. If no servant is present, remove it yourself without being noticed, because it is not refined to call attention to anything that might hurt or embarrass someone, no matter who he is. If someone is good enough to do you this kind of service, thank him most sincerely.

There are some other defects concerning spitting to which you must pay strict attention so as not to fall into them. There are some people who make a loud noise, a very disagreeable one, by forcefully drawing up the phlegm and spittle from the depths of their lungs. This is something that happens ordinarily among older people. This manner of spitting is very rude. So as not to cause any inconvenience to others, try not to make any noise, or very little, when spitting.

Other people keep the phlegm in their mouth for a long time. This is against decorum. Spit out immediately whatever phlegm there is in the throat.

There are even some people (this ordinarily happens only with children) who push saliva and phlegm around in their mouths with their tongues until it is on the edge of their lips. Some purposely spit on others; some spit on the floor or into the air. This behavior shows a kind of insolence that is very impolite and that wellborn people are not even capable of doing.

As much as you can, avoid coughing; especially avoid it when at table, when you are speaking to someone, or when someone is speaking to you. This respect is owed especially to the word of God when you are listening to it, so as not to prevent others also

from hearing it easily. But if, like everyone else, you do have to cough when in company, do so rarely and without a lot of noise.

11

The Back, Shoulders, Arms, and Elbows

It is unbecoming to go around with a stooped back, as though carrying a heavy load on your shoulders. Instead, develop the habit of holding yourself erect at all times; make children do the same. Carefully avoid lifting your shoulders and hunching them up, holding them crooked, or lifting one higher than the other.

Decorum does not permit you to move your shoulders from side to side when walking, making them look like a pendulum on a clock, or to swing them back and forth. This gives the impression that you have a haughty attitude and are a person who is conceited.

Turn neither your back nor your shoulders, even slightly, when speaking to someone or when someone is speaking to you.

It is most impolite to stretch out your arms, to reach out with them, to twist them one way or another, to keep them behind your back, or to hold them on your hips, as women sometimes do when they are angry and are scolding someone.

Do not swing your arms when walking, not even under the pretext of going faster and making up lost time, nor ought you to keep your arms folded. This is an attitude of modesty befitting religious but not laypeople. Decorum requires laypeople to hold their arms in front of them, resting lightly against the body, with one hand holding the other.

It is altogether against politeness to lean on your elbows while listening to someone speak. It is even more impolite to do so at table, and to adopt this posture while praying would be a gross lack of respect for God.

Be careful not to strike or to poke anyone with your elbow, whether through familiarity or playfulness. Never do so, even when you want to speak to someone; do not even put your hand on the other person's arm.

It would be a very uncouth manner of behaving to rebuff anyone who comes to speak to you by raising an arm as though

to strike or push the person away or to shove the person with your elbow. Mildness, humility, and respect for your neighbor must always be apparent in your conduct.

12

The Hands, Fingers, and Nails

Decorum requires that you have your hands clean and always keep them so. It is shameful to appear in public with filthy, stained hands; only workingmen or peasants might be excused for doing so. To keep your hands clean and neat, wash them every morning, again before meals, and every time during the day when you happen to soil them while doing some work.

It is not proper, after soiling your hands or washing them, to wipe them on your clothes, on those of someone else, on the wall, or on anything where another person might pick up some of the grime.

In the presence of people to whom you owe respect, you would be taking a considerable liberty to rub your hands together, whether it be because of the cold, out of joy, or for any other reason. Do not do this even in the company of your closest friends.

It is unbecoming for laypeople to keep their hands in their sleeves or to keep them clasped when speaking to someone. Such behavior is befitting a religious rather than a layperson. Decorum does not permit you to keep your hands in your pockets or to hold them behind your back. Such uncouth behavior might be expected of a porter.

It is not refined to tap someone with your hand, not even in play. This is acting like a schoolboy and is done only by a child who is flighty and not well behaved.

When speaking in conversation, do not tap your hands together or make any gestures. Moreover, carefully avoid touching the hands of those with whom you are speaking, for this would show very little courtesy and respect. Still less must you pull on the buttons, the tassels, the neck cloth, or the mantle that another is wearing or even touch them.

It is a sign of friendship and special regard to place your hand in another's as a gesture of politeness. Therefore, as a rule, do this only with a person of the same social rank, because friendship can exist only between people who are in no way inferior or superior to each other.

If you owe respect to a person, you are never permitted to offer your hand as a sign of esteem or affection. This would be to fail in the respect due to that person and to act with undue familiarity. If a person of high rank or in some way superior to you takes your hand, however, you ought to consider this an honor and immediately return the gesture, accepting this favor as a notable sign of kindness and goodwill.

When giving your hand to anyone as a sign of friendship, always present your bare hand; at such a time it is against decorum to have a glove on your hand. However, when you offer a hand to help someone who has stumbled or to a woman to guide her, it is courteous to do this with a gloved hand.

It shows that you know nothing about decorum if you point to a place, to the person you are talking about, or to another person at a distance. As a courteous person, never take the liberty to pull on your fingers, as though to lengthen them, or to make the joints crack. Also, it is ridiculous and suggests thoughtlessness to drum with your fingers, and it is most disgusting to spit on them.

As a person of good judgment, you must never strike anyone with either your fingers or your hand, and you must never give a person those little thumps that are called taps.

It is very important not to let your nails grow too long or to allow them to be filled with dirt. For this reason, it is good to cut them every week and to clean them daily.

However, it is unbecoming to trim your nails when in company, especially the company of people to whom you owe respect, nor must you cut them with a knife or bite them with your teeth. To trim your nails properly, use a pair of scissors. Take care of your nails in private or when with people you see familiarly every day. Turn aside while cutting them.

To scratch the wall with your nails, even under the pretext of obtaining some sand to dry what you have written, to scratch pages of books or other objects that you have in hand, to make streaks with your nails on a card or a piece of paper, to stick your nail into a piece of fruit or into anything else, to scratch yourself on your body or your head—all these are impolite and are so unbecoming that you cannot do them without giving proof of a vulgar frame of mind. You must not even think of such things, except to inspire yourself with disdain for them.

13

The Parts of the Body That Must Be Covered; the Necessities of Nature

Both decorum and decency require that you keep all parts of your body covered except the hands and the head. Thus it is very unbecoming to have your chest or arms bare, your legs without stockings, or your feet without shoes. It is even against the law of God to expose certain parts of the body that both decency and nature oblige you always to keep covered.

As much as possible, carefully avoid touching with your bare hand those parts of the body that are ordinarily kept covered, and if you are obliged to touch them, do so with caution.

Because you ought to consider your body only as a living temple where God wishes to be adored in spirit and in truth and as a living tabernacle that Jesus Christ has chosen as his dwelling place, you must, considering these noble privileges that you enjoy, show much respect for your body. These considerations ought to make you resolve not to touch your body or even to look at it without an indispensable necessity.

It is proper to accustom yourself to put up with various slight discomforts without twisting yourself, rubbing, scratching, fidgeting, or assuming any unbecoming posture. This kind of behavior and these improper postures are entirely contrary to reserve and to self-control.

It is more contrary to decorum and refinement to look at or to touch anyone else, especially a person of the other sex, in a way that God forbids us to do regarding even ourselves. Thus, it is highly improper to look at a woman's breasts, still more improper to touch them. It is not permitted even to stare fixedly at her face.

Women must also take great care to cover their body decently and to keep their face veiled, as Saint Paul advises, because it is not allowed to display in themselves what is not allowable and decent for others to look at.

When in bed you must try to take a posture so becoming and modest that those who draw near the bed are unable to

distinguish the form of your body. Take care also not to uncover yourself in any way so as to show any part of your naked body or any part that is not decently covered.

When you need to urinate, always seek out some secluded place. When there are other natural needs to be taken care of, decorum requires, even for children, that these be done only in a place where you cannot be noticed.

When in company, it is most uncouth to let gas escape from your body, whether from the upper or from the lower part, even if this is done without noise. It is shameful and disgusting to do so in such a way that you can be heard by others.

It is never appropriate to speak about the parts of the body that must always be kept hidden and about certain bodily necessities to which nature has subjected all of us or even to name them. If sometimes you cannot avoid this in the case of a sick person or someone who is indisposed, do so in such a courteous manner that the terms you use cannot offend against decorum.

The Knees, Legs, and Feet

Politeness requires that when seated, you keep your knees in their natural position. It is unbecoming to have them too close together or too wide apart. It is especially uncouth to cross your legs, particularly when in the presence of women.

It would be very bad to keep moving your legs when you are seated; it is intolerable to swing them up and down. This must never be allowed, even in children; it is so contrary to decorum.

Crossing your legs is very uncouth. Never do this, not even in the presence of your servants.

You must take care that your feet do not sweat and give off a bad odor, especially in summer, for this is very disagreeable to others. So that this unpleasantness does not happen, always take pains to keep your feet very clean.

Decorum requires you, when standing, to keep your weight over your heels, with your heels separated about four fingers' width from each other. It is unbecoming to keep moving your feet and worse to tap them on the floor like a horse pawing the ground. Those who naturally have a dreamy or flighty disposition must pay strict attention to themselves, so that they do not fall into these kinds of defects.

It is a sign of slovenliness for you to spread your feet out in front or to stand now on one foot, now on the other.

Do not make it appear, especially when in company, that you are tired of standing, which could be presumed from certain postures. This is particularly the case when you are with others whose rank or dignity surpasses your own.

Pay special attention to what you do with your feet when you are seated. Do not tap the ground constantly, as if you were beating a drum. Do not let your feet swing, and do not move them about playfully. This is childish and must not be permitted even in children. Do not cross your feet one over the other, twist them, placing the back of the heel or the ankle on the floor, or hold the front of your foot up in the air. Place both feet firmly on the ground, and keep them there. Also avoid holding your

heels far apart or aligning your feet with the toes of one foot touching the heel of the other.

When walking, you can commit a number of faults against decorum with your feet, for it is very unbecoming to drag your feet or to point your toes to the side. You must also take great care not to step too closely along the inner or outer edge of your shoe. It is also very improper to walk on tiptoe. It is just as bad to skip, as though you are dancing, or to rub one heel against the other. It is always against courtesy and self-control to stamp violently on the ground, on the paving stones, or on the floor.

When kneeling, take great care not to cross your feet, nor must they be kept too far apart or too close together. It is shameful at such a time to sit back on your heels. This reveals an effeminate heart and a soul without nobility and can only be the effect of great slovenliness and a totally sensual laxity.

It is very rude, even shameful, for you to kick anyone, no matter in what part of the body. This is something that cannot be permitted to anyone, not even to a master when dealing with his servants. This kind of punishment characterizes a violent and irrational person and does not become Christians, who must not maintain or display any characteristics but kindness, moderation, and wisdom in everything they do.

Part Two

Decorum in Common Activities and in Ordinary Situations

1

Rising and Going to Bed

Although civility has nothing to say about the hour when you ought to retire or the time when you ought to get up, it is a matter of decorum to rise early in the morning. Besides the fact that it is a defect to sleep too long, it is, says Saint Ambrose, a shameful and intolerable thing for the sun at its rising to find you still in bed (*Serm. 19. sur le Psau.* 118 [*Expositio in Psalmum*, 118]).

It is likewise to change and to reverse the order of nature for you to make day into night and night into day, as some people do. The devil induces you to act in this way, for he knows that darkness provides occasions for sin. He is pleased if you live most of your life during the night. Instead, follow Saint Paul's advice. Lay aside, he says, the works of darkness; walk, that is, act with decorum, as we must during the day. Make use of the weapons of light; devote the night to sleep, and use the day to do all your work. You would no doubt be ashamed and embarrassed to do in broad daylight the works of darkness and to mingle with your actions anything out of place when you can be seen by others.

It is, therefore, entirely contrary to decorum, as Saint Paul observes, to go to bed when morning is breaking, as some people do, and to get up around noon. It is quite proper, both for your health and for the good of your soul, to go to bed not later than ten o'clock and to get up no later than six in the morning. Say to yourself the words of Saint Paul, and repeat them to those whom laziness keeps in bed: The time has come for us to rise from our sleep; the night is past, and the day has dawned. Thus you may then address God in the words of the Royal Prophet: O God, my God, I watch for you from the break of day (Ps 62 [63]).

It is not like a person of good judgment to have to be called repeatedly to get up or to hesitate long in doing so. Hence, as soon as you are awake, you must rise promptly.

It is very unbecoming and shows little refinement to amuse yourself by chatting, bantering, or playing on your bed. Your bed is made only to rest your body after the work and preoccupations of the day, and it ought to be used for resting only. Hence you must not remain in bed once you no longer need to rest.

It is, moreover, not proper for you, as a Christian, to indulge in this kind of amusement and playfulness that could easily drive out the good thoughts you might have had in mind. Hence, as soon as you are awake, you must get up promptly and with so much circumspection that no part of your body appears uncovered, even if you are alone in the room.

The love we must have for purity, as well as due regard for propriety, ought to induce those who are not married not to allow anyone of the opposite sex to enter the room where they sleep until they are entirely dressed and the bed has been made. For this reason, it is proper that you bolt the door from the inside when you are in the bedroom.

When getting out of bed, do not leave it in disarray or put your nightcap on a chair or some other piece of furniture where it can be seen. Decorum requires that you make your bed before leaving the room, or if the bed is to be made by others, that you at least cover it properly in such a way that it appears to be made. It is most unbecoming to leave a bed unmade and in disarray.

You must also take care to empty your chamber pot or to have it emptied as soon as you get up. Never empty it out of the window or into the street; to do so is very uncivilized. You must also see that it is kept clean and that no sediment accumulates at the bottom, which might give rise to unpleasant odors. That is why it must be washed and rinsed out every day.

It is most uncivilized to let a chamber pot be seen by anyone when there is urine in it or when you are going to empty it. This is why it is proper that you select a time for doing this when you will not be observed by anyone.

Have a regular time for going to bed, just as you ought to have for rising. It is no less important to perform well this last action of the day than to perform well the first.

It is in conformity with decorum to retire a little late, ordinarily about two hours after supper.

Children must not go to bed before going to greet their father and mother and wishing them a good night. This is a duty and an act of respect that nature requires them to perform.

Just as you must get up with much modesty and in doing so give an indication of your piety, so you must also go to bed in a Christian manner, doing this with all possible propriety, only after having prayed to God. To act like this, you must neither undress

nor go to bed when anyone else is present. Unless you are married, you must, above all, never go to bed in the presence of anyone of the other sex, for this is entirely contrary to decency and refinement.

It is even less allowable for people of different sexes to sleep in the same bed, even if they are only young children, nor is it appropriate for people of the same sex to sleep together. This is what Saint Francis de Sales recommended to Madame de Chantal in regard to her children, when she still lived in the world, as something extremely important and as much a practice of decorum as one of Christian morality and piety.*

Decorum also suggests that when going to bed, you keep your eyes away from your body and avoid glancing at it. This is something that parents must strive to teach their children to help them preserve the treasure of purity that they must hold very dear and at the same time conserve the great honor of being members of Jesus Christ and consecrated to his service.

As soon as you are in bed, cover your whole body except your face, which must always remain uncovered. You must not, just to be more comfortable, assume an unbecoming posture or let the pretext of sleeping better become more important than decorum. It is not appropriate to draw up your legs; you ought to stretch them out. It is proper to sleep now on one side and now on the other, for it is not seemly to sleep lying on your stomach.

When, because of unavoidable circumstances, you are obliged during a journey to sleep with someone of the same sex, it is lacking in decorum to be so close that you can disturb or even touch the person, and it is even less proper to put your legs on those of the other person.

When in bed, it is not refined to talk, for beds are made only to sleep in. As soon as you are in bed, you must be ready to go to sleep promptly.

Try not to make any noise or to snore when sleeping. You must not twist yourself around from side to side frequently, as though you were disturbed about something and did not know on which side to put yourself.

* The marginal reference in the 1703 edition is not clear.

2

The Manner of Dressing and Undressing

It was sin that created the need for us to dress and to cover our body with clothing. This is why, because we carry with us at all times the condition of sinners, we must never appear not only without clothing but also without being fully dressed. This is required both by decency and by the law of God.

A great many people take the liberty of wearing their dressing gowns, often without other clothing or sometimes just with slippers. Although it seems that as long as you do not go outside, you can do practically anything in this attire, it is entirely too casual to be dressed only this way for any length of time.

It is against decorum to put on your dressing gown as soon as you have come back home, in order to be comfortable, and to let yourself be seen dressed like this. It is only elderly or infirm people who can be permitted to act in this way. It would even be a sign of lack of respect for someone not your inferior to receive a visit from that person while you are attired in this way.

It is even more unbecoming for you to go without stockings in the presence of anyone or to wear only a shirt or a simple undergarment. It is intolerable to wear a nightcap when you are out of bed, unless you are indisposed, for this covering is to be used only when sleeping. It is most appropriate that you acquire the habit of never speaking to anyone, except to your servants, until you are fully dressed in your ordinary clothes; this is how a prudent, disciplined person who knows how to behave would act.

It is also a matter of refinement to dress promptly and to put on first the articles of clothing that cover the body most completely, so as to keep hidden the parts that nature forbids us to show. Always do this out of respect for the majesty of God, which you must keep constantly before your eyes.

There are some women who need two or three hours, and sometimes the entire morning, to get dressed. One could say of them with justice that their body is their God and that the time they use in ornamenting it is time they rob from the One who is their

only living and true God. This also robs time from the care they must take of their families and children, something they ought to regard as one of the duties required of them by their state of life. They certainly cannot act in this way without violating God's laws.

It is uncivilized and rude for you to undress in the presence of others and to take off your shoes to warm your bare feet by the fire. Nor is it appropriate for you in the presence of others to take off your shoes or to lift up your feet to warm them more easily. There are people who seek their own ease by doing these things, but such ways of acting have nothing to do with decorum.

It is even far more uncivilized, when taking off your shoes, to scatter dirt on the people present. It is shameful to inspect your socks, to shake them out, and to remove the mud from them when others are present and watching, except for your servants. It is something even more intolerable, when taking off your shoes, to cause dirt to fly into anyone's face.

Just as refinement requires that when you dress, you put on first the articles of clothing that cover most of the body, it is also a sign of decorum, when you undress, to take off the same articles last, so that you cannot be seen without being decently attired.

While undressing, place your clothes neatly on either a chair or some other place that is clean and where you can easily find them again the next morning without having to hunt for them.

During the winter you might be allowed to spread your clothes on your bed if you have nothing else to cover yourself with, but in that case you ought to turn them inside out, so as not to get them dirty. It would be more proper, however, if you did not have to use them in this way.

3

Clothing

Article 1: **Appropriateness and Style of Clothing**

The cleanliness of your clothing is one of the main concerns of decorum. Clean clothing tells a lot about your attitude and discipline and generally gives a good idea of your virtue, an impression that is not without basis.

For clothing to be proper, it must suit the person who wears it and be in keeping with the person's build, age, and state of life. There is nothing more unseemly than clothes that do not fit the person wearing them. This disfigures the entire person, especially if the garments are too loose and if they are fuller or longer than needed to fit the one who is wearing them. It is better, ordinarily, for apparel to be too short or too tight than to be too long or too loose.

Clothes will be appropriate if they are in keeping with the age of the person wearing them. It is against decorum to dress a child like a youth; the clothes of a young person ought to be more ornate than those of an older one. For example, it is contrary to decorum for a 15-year-old boy to dress all in black, unless he is an ecclesiastic or is preparing to enter the clerical state. It would be ridiculous for a young man who is thinking of marriage to dress in clothes as simple and unadorned as those worn by a man of 70. What suits the one is certainly not appropriate for the other.

It is also important for people who are having clothes made for themselves to pay attention to their social station, for it would not be appropriate for a poor person to be dressed like a wealthy one or for a commoner to go about dressed like a person of high rank.

There are certain types of clothing, simple and unadorned and made of not too fine a material, that are in common usage and that anyone, except perhaps the very poor, can wear. It would be more in keeping with decorum, however, for workmen to leave garments made of fine broadcloth to people who belong to a higher level of society than theirs.

Garments bearing various insignia of importance are appropriate only for people of distinguished rank. A garment with gold braid or one made of fine fabric would be good only for a person of rank; the commoner who would wish to wear such clothing would make a fool of himself. In addition, he would be spending money in a way that would displease God, for it would be more than his station in life requires and his means allow. It would also be very unbecoming for a shopkeeper to wear a feather in his cap or a sword at his side.

In like manner, women ought to adapt their clothing to their social condition. Although it might be tolerable for a woman of high rank to wear a gold-embroidered skirt, this hardly befits a Christian woman, and for a woman of the bourgeoisie, it would be quite insolent. She could not wear a necklace of fine pearls or a large diamond without going above her social condition.

In your clothing, negligence is not to be avoided less than eccentricity; both these excesses are equally to be condemned. Affectation is contrary to God's law, which condemns luxury and vanity in your clothing and in other exterior ornaments. Negligence in your attire is a sign that you either do not pay much attention to God's presence or lack sufficient respect for God. It also shows that you do not respect your own body, which you ought to honor as a temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit and the tabernacle that Jesus Christ has the goodness to visit frequently.

If you wish to be dressed appropriately, follow the customs of the country, and dress more or less like people of your rank and age. Still, it is important to take care that your clothes have nothing luxurious or anything superfluous about them. You must avoid whatever suggests ostentation or worldliness.

The best way to judge the appropriateness of clothing is by custom; follow it without fail. Because the human spirit is prone to change and the things that pleased us yesterday no longer do so today, there have been inventions, and are still being invented every day, all sorts of different ways of dressing to satisfy this changing spirit. Those who would want to dress as people did 30 years ago would make themselves look ridiculous and eccentric. It is, however, characteristic of the conduct of people of good judgment never to attract attention to themselves in any way.

Fashion is what people call the style in which clothes are made at a given time. You ought to follow it in the matter of your hats,

linen, and outer garments. It would be against decorum for you to wear a tall hat or one with a wide brim when everyone else uses low-cut hats with narrow brims.

Nevertheless, it is not always advisable to adopt all the newest fashions right away. Some of them are capricious and bizarre, while some are reasonable and conformable to decorum. Just as you ought not to go against the latter, neither must you adopt too hastily the former, which ordinarily are followed only by a few people and do not last very long.

The surest and most reasonable rule concerning fashion is do not invent your own, do not be the first to try it, and do not wait until everyone else has given it up before abandoning it.

As for those who are clerics, their fashion ought to be to dress exteriorly like those clergymen who are most pious and most regular in their conduct, following the advice of Saint Paul, who says not to be conformed to the times.

Article 2: **Modesty and Cleanliness of Clothing**

The way to set limits on fashion in clothing and to prevent those who follow fashion from falling into excess is to submit and to reduce style to a matter of modesty. This ought to be the rule of conduct for the Christian in everything that concerns external appearance. To be modestly dressed, you must not have any appearance of luxury or vanity. It is a sign of a base spirit for you to be attached to clothing and always to be seeking striking and sumptuous apparel. If you act in this way, you become contemptible to all people with good sense; what is far worse, you publicly renounce the promises you made in Baptism, and you abandon the Christian spirit. If, on the contrary, you despise all such vain ostentation, you will show that you have a noble heart and a lofty spirit, for you will give proof that you are more concerned about ornamenting your soul with virtue than about embellishing your body, and you will show by the modesty of your clothing the wisdom and the simplicity of your soul.

Women, being by nature less capable of great things than men, are also more inclined to vanity and luxury in their clothing. This is why Saint Paul, after exhorting men to avoid the more gross vices into which they fall more easily than do women, goes on to

recommend to women to dress modestly, to let reserve and chastity be their adornments, not to wear pearls, gold jewelry, and sumptuous apparel, and to dress as women who show by their good works that they profess to live a life of piety (1 Tm 2:10).

After this exhortation of the great Apostle, there is nothing more to be prescribed for a Christian than to observe it and to imitate in this matter the early Christians, who edified everyone by the modesty and simplicity of their clothing.

It is a shameful thing, yet there can be found a few effeminate men, who delight in wearing very rich clothing and who try in this way to gain the attention of others. They ought to try to raise their spirits much higher and to realize that clothes are the shameful stigma of sin. Recognizing themselves as born to go to heaven, they ought to take all the pains possible to make their souls beautiful and agreeable to God.

This is the advice that Saint Peter gives to women, even telling them to despise appearances and not to attire themselves in fancy clothes but to beautify the inner heart by the incorruptible purity of a modest and peaceful soul, which is very rich in God's sight (1 Pt 3:3–4).

You ought to take particular care to keep your clothes very clean at all times. Modesty and decorum can never tolerate soiled or unkempt apparel. If you let your shoes, hat, or clothes stay full of dust, you fail against propriety, just as do those who appear outside the home with soiled garments. This is always a sign of great negligence.

It is also very improper to allow grease spots or other stains to be on your clothes or to wear dirty and torn garments. This is a mark of a person with poor education and little discipline.

Your body linen must be no less clean and fresh than your outer garments. With this in mind, you must take care when writing not to let any ink fall on your shirt and not to soil your shirt through negligence, whether in eating or in doing something else. You must also change your shirt frequently, at least every week, and see to it that it is always white.

Article 3: **Hats and How To Wear Them**

Hats are ornaments for your head as well as protection against numerous discomforts. Thus, to wear your hat aslant on your ear, to keep it too far down on your brow as though to hide your face, and to wear it pushed so far back on your head that it slips down onto your shoulders are all ridiculous and unbecoming ways of wearing a hat. Raising up the brim in front until it is as high as the crown is a sign of haughtiness, which is altogether intolerable.

When greeting someone, take your hat in your right hand, removing it from your head entirely and in a courteous manner. Extend your arm full length while holding the hat by the brim, with the part that covers your head held toward the person you greet. If you remove your hat to greet someone in the street or passing by, do so a moment before meeting that person; do not replace your hat until the person has gone on a little way. If you wish to greet another person as you approach, you must take off your hat five or six paces before encountering that person.

When entering any place where there is some distinguished person or one to whom great respect is due, always take off your hat before entering. If those who are already inside are standing with their hats off, you must assume the same posture. After removing your hat very courteously, turn its inner side toward yourself, and place it under your left arm or hold it in front of your body, a little to the left. When seated, you must take your hat off, and decorum requires that you hold it on your knees, the inside toward you, with your left hand either beneath it or above it.

When you speak to anyone, it is highly uncivilized to keep turning your hat in your hands, to scratch on it with your fingers, to beat on it as though it were a drum, to fiddle with its cords or ribbons, to scrutinize what is inside it or on the outside of it, to hold it in front of your face, or to cover your mouth with it and prevent people from hearing you speak. It is more disgusting to chew at the brim while holding the hat in front of your mouth.

Here are the circumstances in which you must remove your hat: 1) in a place where there are important people; 2) when you greet someone; 3) when you give or receive anything; 4) when you are being seated at table; 5) when you hear pronounced the sacred name of Jesus or of Mary, except at table, for then you must simply bend your head, and 6) when you are in the presence of people

to whom you owe great respect, for example, ecclesiastics, magistrates, or other dignitaries. In the presence of such people, you must take off your hat at first, but it is not necessary to remain uncovered unless you are greatly inferior to them. You must also remove your hat in front of all people superior to you and not put it on again until invited to do so. However, once you put your hat back on, you need not remove it at every word they say or step they take. That would be annoying and disagreeable for the people spoken to and equally so for you.

It is contrary to decorum to remove your hat while at table, unless some person comes in who is deserving of respect. However, if a person of high rank drinks to your health or offers you something, you ought to take off your hat. If there is some person of high rank at table who has taken off his hat to be more comfortable, you must not imitate this, for it would be acting in too familiar a manner. You must keep your hat on.

When anyone speaks to you, hat in hand, you must ordinarily invite him to put his hat on if you are his superior in rank. You might say, "Please put your hat on, sir." Such a manner of speaking, however, is not permitted except in dealing with people much inferior to you in rank.

To invite someone who is your superior to put his hat on is very uncivilized. It might be done with a person whom you know well and who is your equal, but you must not do so as though giving an order, nor must you use words that sound this way. You can simply make a sign and put on your own hat at the same time or use some circumlocution, saying, for instance, "Perhaps you are uncomfortable, sir, without your hat on." If you are with close friends, you might use some more familiar expression, for instance, "Would you mind if we both put our hats on?"

Article 4: Mantle, Gloves, Stockings, Shoes, Shirt, and Neck Cloth

Refinement requires that you wear your mantle on both shoulders and let it fall free in front, not rolled up over your arms; it is still more improper to fold it back above your elbows. According to decorum, you ought to wear the mantle at table.

Never enter a place where distinguished people are while wrapped in your mantle. To do so in the house of a prince would leave you open to a reprimand or even to being asked to leave.

It is impolite to tug at the mantle or other clothing of a person to whom you wish to speak, especially if this is a person of rank or someone superior to you.

It is in keeping with decorum to wear gloves when you go about in the streets, when you are in company, and when you go out to the country. It is unbecoming to hold them in your hands, to wave them about, to play with them, or to use them to strike anyone. All this is schoolboy behavior.

You must take off your gloves when entering a church, before taking holy water, when you kneel to pray to God, and before sitting down at table.

When you wish to greet someone with profound respect, for instance, by kissing the person's hand, your own hand must be bare, and it is sufficient to remove the glove from your right hand. It is also good manners for you to do the same before giving or receiving anything.

When you are in company, it is uncivilized to keep taking off and putting on your gloves. It is equally rude to put them into your mouth, to nibble or suck them, to carry them under your left arm, to put on only the left glove and hold the other one in the left hand, or to keep them in your pockets when you ought to be wearing them.

It is very disgusting to be seen with stockings that have fallen down over your heels because you did not attach them properly. Stockings must be pulled up snugly so as not to make wrinkles on your legs. You must never allow your stockings to appear even slightly torn, to let any part of them be seen over your shoes, or to wear them so tightly that your legs can be seen through them.

As for shoes, you must make sure that they are properly fastened with buckles or tied with laces.

It is rude to wear your shoes inside or outside the house as though they were slippers, and decorum requires that they always be kept very clean.

Your clothes must always be so well fastened in front, especially over the chest, that your shirt cannot be seen. It would be unpardonable negligence to allow your shirt sleeves to hang down over your wrists because you failed to fasten them or to let the strings

of your underwear hang out. You would draw down on yourself deserved embarrassment if you let your shirt stick out anywhere.

Decorum does not allow you to have your neck uncovered. You ought always to wear a cravat when you appear in public and at home. Whenever you are sick or not completely dressed, you must at least wear a clean neck cloth.

Article 5: **Sword, Stick, Cane, and Staff**

It is most improper and entirely contrary to the good order of a well-regulated society for you to wear a sword if you are a person of the middle class, except if you are traveling or out in the country; however, a child may wear one if he belongs to the gentry.

It is impolite to wear the baldric, or belt, of your sword in front of you, and still less so to put your sword between your legs.

Do not keep your hand on the pommel of your sword when speaking to someone or when walking about. It is enough to do so when you are obliged to draw it.

Although a person may pass for an honorable man if he is always ready to unsheathe his sword whenever anyone addresses him with a cross word or attempts to insult him, you must realize that this kind of conduct is neither courteous nor Christian. For what makes a man act like that is nothing but passion and love for vain and empty honor. It is, therefore, against decorum for you to be so quick to defend yourself against the least slight or injury. The Gospel requires you to suffer injuries patiently. Jesus Christ even commanded Saint Peter to sheath his sword when Peter wanted to use it in defense of his master (Mt 26:52).

When seated, place the sword next to you; draw the baldric, or belt, behind your body as far as possible. Do the same when sitting down at table, taking care that the sword hangs behind you or between the chairs, so that it cannot inconvenience anyone. It is not proper, however, to take it off on such occasions.

When you are obliged to put your sword aside, you must not do so without removing your gloves, nor must you place the sword on the bed with your gloves, for this would constitute a serious breach of politeness. Deposit both in some convenient place, out of sight of those who might come into the room or who are present.

If it happens that a person of high rank enters the dwelling of someone who has a right to wear a sword, the latter must receive his visitor wearing gloves and a sword. People who do not wear a sword ought to have their gloves on and wear their mantle on both shoulders.

Decorum may sometimes suggest that you make use of a cane, but only a true necessity ought to permit you to keep a staff in your hands.

It is unseemly to bring a stick or a light cane into the house of important people, but you can have a large cane in your hand if you are somewhat disabled or if you need it to walk with more assurance.

It is likewise very impolite to play with a stick or a cane and to use it to strike the ground or to knock away pebbles. It is entirely unbecoming to raise it up as though to strike someone, nor is it ever allowed to touch someone with it, not even as a joke.

When you are standing, do not lean on your cane or your stick in a slovenly way, as peasants sometimes do. Nor ought you to thrust it firmly into the ground, as you might do with a staff, for this would indicate that you wish to claim some dignity or authority. The proper way is to move the cane just above the ground in a courteous and controlled way or else to let it touch the ground lightly but without leaning on it.

When you are walking, it is contrary to decorum to carry a cane or a stick under your arm and, no less so, to drag the cane negligently in the mud. It is ridiculous to lean on it in a manner that suggests pride and ostentation. When you make a gesture or some other sign, it is extremely improper to hold a cane or a stick in your right hand.

When sitting, do not use a cane or a stick to write anything on the ground or to draw figures. This would show that you are either distracted or not well brought up. Nor is it correct to place your cane on a chair; you ought to hold it in front of you in a courteous manner.

Never place your stick or your cane on the bed before sitting down to table. That is uncivilized; rather, place it out of sight. If you have a heavy cane, you may lean it against the wall. Both stick and cane must be laid aside when you take off your gloves and your sword.

4

Food

It is so natural for people to seek pleasure in eating and drinking that Saint Paul, teaching early Christians to perform all their actions for the love and glory of God, is obliged to mention eating and drinking specifically, for it is difficult to eat without offending God. Most people eat like animals to satisfy their appetite.

It is, however, no less an offense against decorum than against the laws of the Gospel for you to display great concern about eating and drinking. This, according to the words of Saint Paul, would be to put your glory in what ought to be an embarrassment to you. For this reason, it is characteristic of people to speak little of these matters or anything pertaining to them (Phil 3:19). When you are obliged to do so, you must do it soberly and with circumspection, so that you will appear totally unconcerned about it and not overeager to get the choicest pieces. It is neither courteous nor according to decorum for you to speak in rapturous terms of a meal or a banquet you attended or of one you have been invited to or to take pleasure in describing what was served or what you hope will be served.

One of the harshest and most insulting criticisms, however unjust, that the Jews were able to make of our Lord was to say that he was a lover of wine and good cheer (Mt 11:9 [19]). This is one of the most insensitive things you can say of a refined person, and with reason, for nothing more clearly shows the base quality of a person's mind. The first effect of excess in eating, according to the words of Christ, is that it dulls the heart. The baleful consequence of too much drink, according to Saint Paul, is that it leads to impurity (Phil 3:39 [19]).

Nothing is more contrary to decorum than to have your table at home always set, for this suggests that you have nothing more at heart or more in your dreams than filling your belly and making it your God, as Saint Paul observes. In fact, a table that is always ready is like an altar constantly prepared to offer this deity choice meats that are the victims sacrificed to it.

It is no less contrary to propriety for you to eat and drink at any and all times and to be always ready to do so; this is the way

gluttons and drunkards would act. On the contrary, if you are a wise and refined person, you will regulate the hour and the number of your meals so carefully that only something extraordinary, some very urgent business, or some obligation to stay with an unexpected guest would make you eat outside established times.

There are people who, day after day or at least frequently, go out to meet friends for lunch or to dine with them and who drink and eat to excess during meals of this sort. It is the duty of a Christian who seeks to lead a well-regulated life to avoid such company as much as possible.

The usual custom of refined people is that at breakfast they eat a portion of bread and have something to drink. Beyond this, you ought to be satisfied with lunch and dinner, as is the custom among wise and refined people, who feel that these two meals are sufficient to satisfy nature's needs.

It is against decorum, and it reminds one of peasants, for you to offer a drink to everyone who comes to visit and to press it on such guests, unless someone arrives from the country overheated and needs a little refreshment. If it happens that a person offers you something to drink, aside from this last occasion, you must not accept it, but excuse yourself as politely as possible.

As for banquets, it is sometimes a matter of decorum to hold them and to be present at them, but this ought to happen only rarely and through some sort of necessity. This is what Saint Paul wishes you to understand when he says not to live amid feasting (Rom 13:13). He also recommends that these feasts be neither extravagant nor dissolute; in other words, there must not be too great an abundance and a diversity of food, and no excesses must be committed. In this the rules of decorum are in accord with those of Christian morality, which we must never allow ourselves to forsake, not even to please or to show consideration for our neighbor, for this would be an example of ill-regulated charity and purely human respect.

Article 1: **What You Must Do Before Eating: Washing Your Hands, Saying Grace, and Sitting at Table**

Decorum requires that before eating and taking your meals, you must wash your hands, bless the food, and sit down. Decorum teaches us also the proper manner of performing these actions.

Although, as our Lord tells us in the Gospel, to eat with unwashed hands is not something that defiles a person, it is still a point of courtesy for you always to wash your hands before eating (Mt 15:20). This is a practice that has always been in use. If our Lord criticized the Jews, it was only because they were so scrupulously attached to this detail that they thought they would commit a serious fault if they failed to wash their hands before eating (Mk 7:3–4, 6ff). They even washed several times, fearing that they might defile themselves if they touched any food with slightly dirty hands. Yet they did not fear to defile themselves through the great number of crimes that they committed. Jesus Christ, then, did not in any way criticize this action; he merely condemned excess in this matter.

The order that must be observed in washing your hands is to follow your rank in the family or, if you are eating in company, the rank you occupy among the other guests. However, the most common custom is that when you are with a group of people more or less your equals, you show some marks of deference to others before washing your hands. But it is unnecessary to make a fuss over this; you simply wash along with all the rest.

If in the group there are several people of especially distinguished rank, you must never approach the basin to wash your hands until they have done so first. If, however, a person of superior rank takes you by the hand and invites you to wash along with him, it would be impolite to refuse.

When washing your hands, bend over a little to avoid soiling your clothes, and take care not to splash water on anyone.

It is rude for you to make a lot of noise with your hands by rubbing them vigorously, especially when washing in company with others. If by chance your hands are especially dirty, it would be wise to take the precaution of washing them in private and in some other place before going to wash with others.

If the person who offers to pour water for you deserves some mark of respect, you ought to make some courteous sign when presenting your hands for water to be poured on them. Nor must

you fail to make some other sign afterward to indicate that enough water has been poured.

When there is no one to hold the towel, it is a matter of decorum to take hold of it as soon as you have washed your hands. It is courteous, before wiping your hands, to present the towel to those who have washed either before you or with you and to anticipate their needs in this matter. Never allow the towel to remain in the hands of someone who is of the same or of a higher rank than yourself, but hold it by a corner until this person has finished using it.

When drying your hands, take care not to inconvenience anyone and not to wet the towel to such an extent that others cannot find a dry spot on it to wipe their hands. For this reason, it is polite to wipe your hands only in one spot on the towel.

When everyone has washed, all ought to stand around the table, remove their hats, and wait with great reserve until the food has been blessed.

It is most unbecoming for Christians to sit down at table to eat before the food has been blessed by someone in the group. As the Gospel tells us, Jesus Christ, who is our model in all things, was in the habit of blessing what had been prepared for him and for those who accompanied him. To act otherwise would be to act like animals (Mt 14:18 [19]; 15:36; Mk 6:41).

If a cleric is in the group with you, it is his duty to pronounce the blessing before the meal. It would show a lack of respect for his character as a cleric if a layperson, whatever his rank, dared to try to say grace in his presence. It would also violate the ancient canons, which forbid even a deacon, and with greater reason a layperson, to give a blessing in the presence of a priest.

If no cleric is present, the head of the family, the household-er, or the person with the highest rank among the guests ought to pronounce the blessing. However, it would be very unseemly for a woman to do so if one or several men are present. When a child is present, it often happens that he is told to discharge this duty. Sometimes, when no one wishes to say the grace aloud, each of the guests does so in private in a low voice, but this is something that ought never to happen.

Once grace has been said, decorum requires you to observe what our Lord prescribes in the holy Gospel, namely, that you seat yourself in the last place and at the lower end of the table or that

you wait until a place is assigned to you (Lk 24 [14]:8, 10). It is extremely rude for people undistinguished by their rank to put themselves forward or to take the first places. Children ought not to be seated until all the others have been given a place. When you sit down, you must not have a hat on, and you must not put your hat on until you are entirely settled in your seat and until the more distinguished among the guests have put on their hats.

When you are seated at table, good manners require that you sit up straight, not sprawling over the table or even leaning on it carelessly. It is not becoming to keep so far away from the table that you cannot reach it or to get so close to it that you touch it. Above all, you must never put your elbows on the table. In fact, you ought to sit just close enough to the table to have your wrists rest on it.

One of your main concerns at table must be not to inconvenience anyone, whether with your arms or with your feet. This is why you must not stretch out or open wide your arms or legs or push your neighbor with your elbow. If it happens that the table arrangement is too tight, it is proper to draw back slightly to make a little room. You ought to be willing even to be inconvenienced so as to make things more convenient for others.

Article 2: **Articles Used at Table**

At table you ought to use a napkin, a plate, a knife, a spoon, and a fork. It would be totally contrary to politeness for you to fail to use any of these things while eating.

It is the prerogative of the most distinguished person in the gathering to unfold his napkin first; the others must wait until this person has done so before unfolding theirs. If the guests are all of about equal rank, they ought to unfold their napkins at the same time, without any special ceremony. When unfolding your napkin, you must spread it carefully over your clothes so as not to spill anything on them while eating. It is proper that the napkin cover the clothes up to the chest.

It is rude to use your napkin to wipe your face, even more so to rub your teeth with it. It would be gross and uncivilized to blow your nose in your napkin. It is also unbecoming to wipe plates and other dishes with your napkin.

The uses to which you may and ought to put the table napkin are to wipe your mouth, lips, and fingers when they are greasy, to wipe grease from the knife before cutting a slice of bread, and to wipe the fork and the spoon after using them.

When your fingers are rather greasy, it is proper to remove the grease first with a bit of bread, which you leave on the plate. Then you can wipe your fingers with the napkin, which in this way will not be left too greasy and dirty.

When your knife, spoon, or fork is soiled or greasy, it is very rude to lick it, nor is it becoming to wipe it or anything else on the tablecloth. On such and similar occasions, you must use your napkin. You must take care to keep the tablecloth very clean and to allow nothing to fall on it, whether wine, water, sauce, food, or anything else that might soil it.

After unfolding your napkin, take care that your plate is in front of you and that the knife, fork, and spoon are near at hand, so that you can take them easily and conveniently.

When the plate is soiled, you must avoid scraping it with your spoon or fork in an effort to clean it. Still less ought you to use your fingers to try to clean off your plate or the bottom of your dish. That is something very disgusting. You must either not touch it or, if it is convenient, ask that the plate be changed and another brought.

When plates are changed or taken away, let the person in charge do what has to be done without your arguing and appealing to someone of higher authority. Always let the dishes be removed without saying anything, and accept the new ones presented. However, if it happens that in changing the plates, the domestics serve you before serving a person who is your superior in rank or do not give a plate soon enough to that person, offer and give him yours if you have not yet used it.

At table do not keep the knife constantly in your hand; it must be taken up only when you need to use it. It is likewise very uncivilized to put a morsel of bread into your mouth while holding the knife in your hand, and it is even worse for you to do so with the point of the knife. Observe the same rule when eating apples, pears, or other fruit.

It is against decorum to hold your fork or spoon in your grasp as though it were a baton. Instead, you always ought to hold it be-

tween the thumb and the second finger. Nor ought you ever to hold it in your left hand when bringing food to your mouth. It is never permitted to lick your fork or your spoon after you have eaten whatever was on it. Take as neatly as possible what it contains, and leave as little as possible behind.

When eating soup or something else with a spoon, do not fill up the spoon completely, lest some food might spill on the tablecloth or on your clothes. This is the way a greedy person would act. Rather, when drawing the spoon out of the soup bowl, the dish, or the plate, slide the spoon easily along the rim to take off the drops of soup that might have adhered to the bottom of it.

Never use a fork to bring to your mouth anything liquid or that might spill; the spoon is intended for such use. Propriety requires that you use the fork exclusively to bring solid food to your mouth. It is contrary to decorum to use your fingers to touch anything greasy or any gravy or syrup. If you do so, you might be unable to escape committing a number of other acts of impoliteness, such as frequently cleaning your fingers on the napkin, soiling the napkin and making it dirty, wiping your fingers on your bread, which is quite rude, or licking them, which cannot be permitted in a person who is wellborn and properly educated.

If you wish to give back a spoon, a knife, or a fork to someone who loaned it to you for some reason, decorum requires that you clean it thoroughly with your napkin, unless you give it to one of the servants to wash at the buffet table. After this, you must place it properly on a clean plate and present it to the person from whom it was borrowed.

Article 3: How To Invite Others To Eat; How To Request and To Receive Anything at Table

It is not proper during meals for guests to become involved in urging others to eat. Only the host or the hostess is allowed to do so; others must not take this liberty. There are two ways of doing this: by word and with great politeness or by offering some dish that is known to be, or might be, especially pleasing to the person to whom it is offered.

When you entertain people, you must be sure to encourage them from time to time to eat heartily. Do so with a happy expression on your face, which will convince the guests that you take heartfelt joy in entertaining them. However, do not do this too often or with exaggerated insistence, for this would be very annoying and disagreeable to others.

You may also urge others to take more wine, provided you do so courteously, with moderation, and without insisting. Be very careful, says the Wise Man, about overly encouraging those who like wine, for wine has been the downfall of many, and it is both unfortunate and shameful to see a person who has fallen into intemperance and excessive drinking (Eccl [Sir] 31:30).

It seems that it would be better and more according to Christian decorum not to urge anyone to eat, except when serving him food on his plate, and not to urge anyone to drink; instead, take care that wine is served from time to time to those at table, in case they hesitate to ask.

It will show that you are the slave of your appetite if, when at table, you ask for the things you like best, and it is impoliteness of the grossest kind to ask for the best portions.

If the one who is serving asks you what you would like, you ordinarily ought to answer, "Whatever pleases you," without requesting anything in particular. You may, however, express a preference for one dish rather than another, provided it is not especially fancy, extraordinary, or some unusual delicacy. However, it is far better not to ask for anything at all, whether when serving yourself or when waiting to be served.

When someone presents you with a dish and you no longer care to eat, thank him courteously, and let him understand that you do not need anything more.

Just as it is rude to ask for anything at table, it is also required by decorum that you accept whatever is presented, even if you feel some repugnance for it. Never allow it to be noticed that you have any distaste for eating anything served at table; it is entirely opposed to decorum to say so. Such aversion is often purely imaginary, and you can easily correct yourself of it if you are willing to do yourself a little violence, especially when you are young. Undoubtedly, an easy way to do this would be to go hungry for a few days, for hunger makes everything seem appetizing. It often happens that things a person cannot force himself to eat when

he is not hungry seem truly delicious to him when he is. Pay attention also not to cultivate your appetite; as far as possible, accustom yourself to eat any kind of food. To do this, have food you do not particularly like served often, especially when you have not eaten for some time. Unless you take such precautions, you run the risk of being very disagreeable to others at table, especially to those who are entertaining you.

If your repugnance for what has been served is so great that you cannot overcome it, you still ought not to refuse what has been offered. After having courteously taken a portion, leave it on your plate, with no fuss, and when it seems that others will not notice, have removed what you have been unable to eat.

If what is served at table is liquid or greasy, do not put forth your hand to receive it, but present your plate with your left hand, as decorum requires. Keep the fork or the knife in your right hand so as to keep the morsel on the plate, if this is necessary. Then receive with thanks what is presented, moving the plate toward your mouth as though to kiss it, at the same time bowing politely.

When you are being served sliced portions of meat, it is rude to stretch out your plate hurriedly so as to be one of the first served. This is a sign and a consequence of extreme greediness. Wait until the one who is serving offers you some, and then hold out your plate to receive what is offered. If, however, the one serving happens to overlook someone who is above you in rank, it is proper to excuse yourself from taking what is offered. But if urged to accept, present the dish yourself immediately to the person skipped or to the most distinguished person present, unless this is in fact the person who is doing the serving.

If the person presenting something is your superior in rank or at least more distinguished than you, you need to remove your hat only the first time that he offers you something; do not repeat this gesture again.

Bread, fruit, candies, fresh eggs, and oysters on the half shell can be taken with the hand. Accept these items only after kissing your hand; then stretch it forward to facilitate the action of the person serving.

Article 4: **How To Carve and To Serve Meat; How To Take Portions for Yourself**

It is very rude to undertake to carve meat and to serve it, when you are a guest at the table of a person of higher rank, unless he asks you to do so, even though you are fully expert in the matter. This is something that ought to be done by the host or the hostess or by the one whom they request to undertake this task.

If you are asked to carve and you do not know how to do so, do not be ashamed of this or embarrassed about excusing yourself. If you do know how to perform this task, after cutting the meat, leave the portions in the dish so that each guest can take what he chooses. You may serve the meat yourself if the host asks you to do so, or you may place the dish before the host or hostess, so that they can have the food distributed as they see fit. However, if the table is very large and it is inconvenient for one person to serve all the guests, you may serve, but serve only those nearest to you.

Young people and those of lesser rank must not interfere by serving others. They must simply help themselves from the dish in front of them or receive politely and with gratitude what is presented to them.

When you serve others at table, decorum requires giving them everything they may need, even from the dishes that might be close to them. Take care always to give others the choicest portions; never reserve these for yourself. Give preference to the more distinguished over the less distinguished guests, serving them first, giving them what is best, and not touching anything except with the serving fork. If someone asks you for something that happens to be nearer to you, pass it to him courteously.

To avoid taking for yourself the choicest portions, something that can sometimes happen by mistake if you know no better, and to help you give the best portions to the proper people, it will perhaps be useful here to point out which portions are the best, so that you will not make mistakes in this matter.

With regard to boiled meat, the breast of chicken or capon is considered the preferred piece, and the legs are preferred to the wings. In a piece of beef, the section that is a mixture of fat and lean meat is always the best.

Roast pigeons are always served whole or sliced in half. In all birds that scratch the ground with their feet, the wings are the most delicate portion, but the legs of those that fly are better. In turkeys, geese, and ducks, the best piece is the upper part of the breast, which is to be sliced lengthwise. In a suckling pig, the choicest parts are the ears and the skin; in leverets, hares, and rabbits, the most sought-after parts are the back, the hind legs, and the parts alongside the tail and behind the shoulders.

In a veal loin, the fleshy part is the best, but the kidney is often preferred.

In some fish the most prized portion is the head and what is nearest to it. In fish that have only one bone running from head to tail, such as sole and flounder, the middle of the body is the best part by far.

If something is presented that must be taken from the serving bowl with a spoon, it is very rude to take it with your own spoon, if you have already been using it. If you have not yet used it, you may use it to take whatever you present to another and to put it on his plate; then ask for another spoon for yourself.

If it happens that whoever has asked you to serve something has put his spoon on his plate before sending it around or before presenting it, you must make use of that spoon, not your own.

When someone sitting some distance away asks for something, present him what he needs on a clean plate, never with the knife, fork, or spoon alone.

When something is presented that has dust or ashes on it, do not blow on it to remove the dust, but it is proper to remove it with your knife before serving the item. Your breath might be disgusting to some people, and by blowing you also risk scattering the dust onto the tablecloth or on the food.

When invited to someone's house, it is not courteous to help yourself unless the host of the affair has begged you to feel free or you are very close to and familiarly acquainted with him.

When helping yourself, it is most impolite to make noise with the knife, the spoon, or the fork while taking a portion from the dish. Instead, act with so much circumspection and good judgment that you are scarcely perceived, still less heard, by others.

Always use a knife to cut meat, holding the meat with the fork. Also use the fork to bring to your plate the portion you cut.

Meat must never be taken in your hand, nor must you take too large a piece at a time.

Decorum does not permit you to hunt through the dish, turning up the pieces to find the one that you prefer, nor does it allow you to take the last remaining piece or those that are farthest away. Instead, decorum requires that you take what is nearest to you. It is uncouth to turn the dish around so as to get the piece you want. This can only be done by those who are serving, and they ought to do this only rarely and in a very discreet way.

It is also very impolite to reach out across the dish in front of you in order to take something from another dish farther off. You must ask, but it would be better to wait until you are served.

Take what you wish to eat at a single serving. It is most unbecoming to reach into the dish twice in succession. It is even worse to pick out several pieces bit by bit or to pull the meat to shreds with your fork. When you wish to pick something out of the dish, first wipe the fork or the spoon you intend to use, if you have already used it.

It is extremely impolite and truly shameful for you to wipe the dishes with a bit of bread or to clean them so thoroughly with the spoon or anything else that neither sauce nor bits of meat remain. It is no less rude for you to soak bread in the sauce or to scoop the remains of the sauce with the spoon, and it is most disgusting to dip your finger into the sauce.

If each guest serves himself from a common dish, you must be careful not to reach into it with your hand before the more distinguished members of the company have served themselves, nor must you take anything from it except what is nearest to you.

It is unseemly to touch fish with your knife, unless the fish is in a cake. Fish must ordinarily be taken with your fork and served on a plate.

Do not take olives with your fork; use your spoon. After tarts, jams, and cakes have been cut up on the serving plate, take them with the flat of your knife, sliding it under them so that they can be put on a plate.

Walnuts are taken from the dish by hand, as also is raw or dried fruit. Decorum requires that almost all fresh fruit be peeled before being served and after that be covered carefully with the peelings. However, you may serve fruit without peeling it.

Lemons and oranges are cut across the grain, whereas pears and apples are sliced lengthwise.

At table it is not proper for you to speak much about the quality of the food, whether good or bad, or to comment on the seasoning and the sauces, for this would show that you take great interest in fine dining and like to be treated well, something that discloses a sensual soul and a sad lack of proper education.

Still, politeness does suggest that you show how well satisfied you are with what has been served and how much you appreciate it. If the host asks you what you think of the food served and the delicacies offered, you must always reply as politely as possible and as agreeably as you can, so that the host will not feel bad about anything, as might be the case if you complained that the food was not to your taste or was poorly prepared.

It is uncouth of you to comment that the food is not good or that it is poorly seasoned, for example, that it is too salty or too peppery, too cold or too hot. Remarks like this can only embarrass the host, who ordinarily is not to blame for these deficiencies and perhaps has not even noticed them. It is equally improper to give exaggerated praise to the food and to those who prepared it, trying to show by such signs and remarks that you know the best foods, for this simply shows that you are greedy and a slave of your stomach.

Article 5: **How To Eat Politely**

The Wise Man gives us a number of important suggestions about the manner in which we ought to behave at table if we are to eat with propriety and decorum (Eccl [Sir] 31).

1) He tells us that we must not give in to intemperance as soon as we are seated, scrutinizing the food with avidity as though we would like to devour everything in sight without leaving anything for the others (*ibid.*, 31:12–14).

2) He adds that we must not be the first to reach for the food but leave this honor and mark of preeminence to the most distinguished person in the gathering (*ibid.*, 31:16).

3) He forbids us to eat hurriedly. It is impolite to eat with avidity, for this is the way a glutton would act (*ibid.*, 31:17).

4) He insists that we partake of what is served like a temperate person, eating only with restraint and moderation. This still lets us take whatever we need (Eccl [Sir], 31:19 [17]).

He exhorts us to defer very much to others at table and not to reach into the dish at the same time as someone else does. This is something that is also required by decorum (ibid., 31:21 [18]).

He urges us to be the first, through moderation, to finish eating (ibid., 31:20 [17]). This is how a sober person acts, one who professes to follow the rules of temperance in eating. The reason the Wise Man gives for this is that we must not give way to excess in eating, lest we fall into various other faults.

He adds, to persuade us to follow these rules of refinement and sobriety, that whoever eats little will enjoy healthful slumber, while insomnia, colic, and indigestion are the lot of the intemperate (ibid., 31:23–24 [20 and 22]).

Politeness prescribes no other rules for us regarding the manner of eating than these given to us by the Wise Man, so that we can behave courteously in this activity that requires of us so many and such multiple precautions if we wish to do it well.

Politeness forbids you, while eating, to put a second morsel into your mouth before swallowing the first. It also forbids you to eat so fast that you swallow the food almost without taking time to chew it properly. It prescribes that you eat with moderation, without hurry. Politeness does not permit you to eat so much that you start having hiccups, for that would be a sign of great intemperance.

Politeness recommends that you not be the first to start eating or the first to try a new dish or something that has just been served, unless you are the most prominent person in the group. Nor does politeness allow you to be the last one eating when other people are present for whom you ought to show respect. It is, in fact, a serious breach of propriety for you to continue eating after the others have finished, and nothing is more improper than to make others wait until you have finished before they can leave the table. Children must especially make it a rule to be the last to begin eating and the first to finish.

There are a few other points concerning politeness in the manner of eating that you must carefully observe. It is a matter of decorum, for example, not to lean too far over your plate while eating. You must always keep the lips shut while eating, so that you

do not slurp as pigs do. It is simply intolerable for you to eat using both hands; your right hand alone is used to bring food to your mouth. You must use the spoon or the fork to eat whatever is fresh, greasy, liquid, or might soil your hands. It is entirely against politeness for you to touch the food, particularly the soup, with your fingers.

While eating, you must be careful not to watch those nearby to observe what they are eating or to notice whether they have been served better portions or ones more to your taste than those given to you.

It is extremely improper at table to smell the dishes or to give them to someone else to smell. You are never permitted, if you detect some bad odor in the food, to call this to the attention of others. It would be even more impolite to put back into the serving dish food that you had raised to your nose to smell.

If it happens that you find something distasteful in the food, for example, a hair, a bit of dirt, or something similar, you must avoid showing it to others; instead, remove the object in such a way that no one will notice.

If you accidentally put something into your mouth that is exceedingly hot or that might do you harm, you must try to swallow it without making known, if possible, the difficulty you are experiencing. If you cannot hold it in your mouth and it is impossible to swallow it, you must promptly, without allowing others to notice, raise your plate to your mouth with one hand and, turning aside a little and covering your face with the other hand, replace on the plate the object you have in your mouth. Immediately after having done so, give the plate to a servant who might be standing near you or remove the plate yourself (for propriety never permits anything to be thrown on the floor). As for things that you cannot eat, such as bones, eggshells, fruit parings, nutshells, and so forth, always place them on the edge of your plate.

It is thoroughly unseemly to take from your mouth with your fingers whatever you cannot swallow, such as bones, nutshells, and so forth. It is even worse to let these things fall from your mouth onto either the plate or the floor, as though you were vomiting. It is equally rude to spit them onto the plate or into your hand. What you must do is to take them discreetly in your half-closed left hand and place them on your plate without letting anyone see what you are doing.

Article 6: **How To Eat Soup**

Soup can be served in two different ways. When offered to a group, it is brought to the table in a tureen; when served to an individual, it is put into a bowl. The latter is the way it is usually done in families, especially for children and people in poor health.

It would be a great blunder to serve soup in bowls when you give a dinner. The soup must be placed in a tureen, along with several serving spoons, according to the number of guests. Guests ought to use only these spoons to take soup from the tureen and to transfer it to their own soup bowls.

It is impolite to take soup from the dish with your own spoon. Take the soup with one of the serving spoons provided, and put it into your soup bowl; then return the serving spoon to the tray without touching the spoon to your lips. Use your own spoon to eat the soup in your soup bowl. If no serving spoons are provided, you may use your own spoon to fill your soup plate, but wipe the spoon carefully beforehand.

As to the way you ought to eat soup from a bowl, it is against decorum to sip it from the bowl, as an invalid might. Take it little by little with the spoon. It would also show a great lack of politeness to hold the bowl by a handle and to pour into your spoon what is left after you have eaten the soup. It is also very rude of you to grasp the bowl with your left hand, as though you fear that someone might want to take it away.

Decorum requires that you not make any noise with either the bowl or the spoon when eating soup and that you not scrape the bowl from side to side so as to gather up the rest of the bread that might be stuck at the bottom.

Although it is inappropriate to clean your bowl so thoroughly that nothing remains, it is proper not to leave any soup in it. You ought to eat all that is in the bowl and whatever else you have put on your plate. The same rule does not apply as regards the soup dish itself. It would be impolite to empty it completely, and you must not take the rest of the soup when only a little remains.

When you have eaten all that was in your bowl, give the bowl to a servant, or place it somewhere on the table where it will not inconvenience anyone, but never put it on the floor.

When eating soup, hold your fork courteously in your left hand, and use it to steady the soup spoon, so that nothing spills as you

bring the spoon to your mouth. It is very uncivilized to make any noise with your lips when sipping from the spoon or with your throat while swallowing. Place the soup in your mouth, and swallow with such control that not the least sound can be heard.

Soup must be eaten slowly, so that you do not manifest any greediness or eagerness, for this is usually a sign that you either are very hungry or have a big appetite. In a word, this would show everyone that you are a glutton.

It is extremely unbecoming to consume what is in the spoon in successive sips, leaving some soup behind each time after taking the spoon out of your mouth. It is still more rude to replenish the soup in your plate or bowl while some still remains in your spoon. Eat in one sip what is in your spoon and has been brought to your mouth, and do not take several sips.

The way to do this is to avoid filling the spoon too full when you take soup, for this is a considerable failing against decorum. To fill your spoon too much would force you to make two considerable offenses against politeness: first, you would have to open your mouth extremely wide to place the spoon into it; second, you would have to take several sips to empty your spoon, which ought to be emptied in a single sip. In addition, while bringing the spoon to your lips, you run the risk of letting something fall on the tablecloth, on your napkin, or even on your clothing, which would be very inappropriate.

The self-control that you are obliged to maintain at table when eating soup does not permit you to lean forward while lifting the spoon to your mouth. Still less does it allow you to stick out your tongue when bringing the spoon to your lips. You may, however, lean slightly forward, so that nothing falls from the spoon and to avoid soiling your clothes, but be careful to lean only a very little.

When the soup or anything else served is too hot, you must avoid blowing on it, whether in the soup plate or bowl or while bringing it to your mouth. This would be entirely contrary to decorum. It is best to wait a moment until the soup has cooled off, although it is acceptable to stir it gently and politely with your spoon.

Article 7: **How To Serve, To Take, and To Eat Bread and Salt**

The place for the piece of bread taken with your meal is at your left, next to your plate or on the napkin. It is rude to place it on the right or in front of your plate, and even more so, to put it next to someone else's piece of bread.

You could commit several offenses against politeness while cutting bread; children especially must be taught to avoid them. It is, for example, very rude for you to dig into the bread to get at the soft inside part, to split off the two crusty parts when cutting the bread lengthwise, to strip it, so to speak, by removing the crust from all over the loaf, to cut it all up into small morsels, as is done for the blessed bread in church, and to leave it like that on the table, or when cutting the bread, to let many crumbs fall on the tablecloth. It is no less rude for you to grasp the loaf in your bare hand when cutting it, to hold it to your chest, or to cut off a piece while holding the loaf on the tablecloth or on your plate. It is even more improper to break off pieces with your hands, for you must always use a knife to cut bread. All such ways of cutting bread are so ridiculous that only people poorly brought up or with very little education would be guilty of them.

When you wish to present a piece of bread to someone, you must not do so with your bare hand. Rather, bread ought to be offered on a clean plate or in a napkin, and if you are receiving it, take it with one hand as though you were going to kiss it.

When you wish to cut a piece of bread from a loaf that is being shared, you must first clean off your knife. Do not cut off too big a piece at one time. Be careful not to cut off only a crusty corner. You must always cut right across the loaf toward the middle, without taking more from one side of the crust than from the other, for it is neither courteous nor considerate to choose the part of the bread that you prefer. This would mean leaving to others what you reject or what is not to your taste and would give full evidence of your sensuality.

If your teeth are so bad that you cannot eat the crusty part of the bread, it is far more proper to remove the crust little by little as you eat than to take off the crust entirely and all at once, for it is not courteous to have on the table a large piece of bread stripped of its crust.

It is very uncouth, when eating bread, to hold a big piece in your hand. You must ordinarily leave the piece of bread lying on the table and from time to time cut off the morsel you wish to bring to your mouth. Decorum also requires that you put into your mouth only small pieces of bread, which are always raised to your mouth by hand and held by the thumb and the second finger.

Soft-boiled eggs are ordinarily eaten by dipping bread into the egg. That is why, when you want to eat eggs prepared in this way, you must, before breaking the shells, prepare the bits of bread you will need. However, you are never permitted to soak bread in wine, making a kind of soup out of it. This is hardly tolerable even for people who are in poor health; they must not do this unless there is an evident necessity and it is prescribed for them as a valid and practically indispensable remedy.

Salt, the Gospel tells us, gives food its seasoning. You must take it from the salt dish with the tip of your knife, never with the fingers, and then place it on the side of your plate.

Before putting your knife into the salt dish to get some salt, be careful to clean the knife with your napkin, for it is very rude to serve yourself salt with a greasy or dirty knife. Take only as much salt as you need at the moment. Never dip the pieces of meat you wish to eat into the salt dish; use the salt you placed on the edge of your plate.

Do not let yourself be influenced by the silly ideas of people who hesitate to offer salt to others. When you wish to offer salt to those who are seated at some distance, either put some on a plate, which you would then present to those who might want some, or if possible, offer them the salt dish, so that they can serve themselves. When mustard is served at table, use it in about the same way as you do salt.

Article 8: **What To Do with Bones, Gravy, and Fruit**

It is very rude to eat while holding bones in your bare hand, as though you were holding a staff. Decorum requires that you touch bones as little as possible; if it is necessary to do so, you ought to hold them with two fingers and at some spot where the fingers will not become too greasy.

It is very disgusting for you to gnaw at bones, holding them in both hands as dogs do in their front paws. It is no less unbecoming to suck on them so noisily that others can hear. You must not even bring them to your mouth; be satisfied with slowly removing as much of the meat as possible with your knife. Leave the bones on the plate afterward, and never throw them to the floor, for this would be very impolite.

It is a mark of sensuality and something that you are never permitted to crack bones with your knife or other instrument, to strike them on the table or on your plate, or to shake them in order to draw out the marrow. Extract the marrow with your fork, the tip of your knife, or the handle of your spoon, if this can be done easily; otherwise, do not even make the attempt. It would be far better, however, and far more courteous for you not to bother at all about getting the marrow out of the bones.

It is preferable that you not take any gravy from the serving dish, for this always suggests a certain amount of sensuality in the person who does it. If you do take some, do so with your spoon after wiping it on your napkin; then pour the gravy onto the plate.

It is very rude, when serving yourself, to pour gravy over all the pieces of meat in the serving dish. It is even worse to soak your bread in the gravy, and it is extremely disgusting to dip into the gravy dish any bread or meat that you have already bitten into.

Propriety requires that you be very restrained in touching fruit, preserves, and other items served as dessert and that you eat them with moderation. To do otherwise would show everyone that you are attached to dainties of this sort.

Children especially must be careful not to make any sign with their eyes or their shoulders to show that they want some of these sweets. They must wait until they are given some.

One thing that you are never allowed, above all when you are at table with a person to whom you owe respect, is to slip into your pocket or to hide in your napkin some fruit, such as an apple, an orange, or a pear, to save to eat later.

You are never allowed to gather fruit or flowers when you are in a garden, unless it belongs to an intimate friend, or to ask to take any flowers home. Decorum requires that you never touch anything in such a situation.

It is very uncivilized to offer anyone fruit or anything else that you have already partly eaten. It is also rude to swallow seeds,

to crack them with your teeth, or to break them with something else in order to get at the kernel. It is unbecoming also to spit them out onto your plate or to throw them to the floor or into the fire. Take them in your partly opened left hand, and then discreetly place them on your plate.

Article 9: **How To Request and To Receive Beverages; How To Drink at Table**

It is entirely contrary to decorum to be the first to ask for a beverage, unless you are the highest-ranking person in the group. If you are not, wait until the more distinguished guests have been served.

It is also a lack of the respect due to those you are with to call aloud for a drink. Ask for it in a low voice, but it is even better if you merely ask by a sign.

It likewise shows a lack of respect if you call for a drink while someone else is being served. If there is only one person pouring the beverage, do not ask for anything unless you think that no one else will ask, and wait until everyone has finished drinking. It is even better if you can wait your turn before drinking, unless the host has had something served to you.

When you are sitting next to a person deserving of high honor, it is impolite to receive anything to drink or to have something served to you from his side. Take your glass, and have the drink served on your other side.

When something to drink is presented to you, wipe your fingers on your napkin, and then take the glass by the stem, not in the middle. You must also take care that the one who pours does not put more into the glass than you can drink at one time and that the glass is not so full that some liquid could be spilled on the tablecloth or on people's clothes.

Before drinking, always wipe your lips with the napkin, and do not drink until you have finished your soup. It is not at all permissible to drink while eating soup, nor is it considered courteous to drink right after finishing your soup. Wait until you have eaten something else first.

It is a matter of refinement before drinking to wipe your lips carefully with your napkin and to be sure that your mouth is entirely empty, so that you do not leave greasy spots on the glass, which

would be very disgusting. It is very impolite to drink when your mouth is full or before you have finished swallowing food. You must not make long speeches while holding the glass in your hand, and it is much better not to speak at all from the time the drink has been poured until all have drunk. It is not considered polite to pay much attention to what you would like to drink, and even less so for you to sample the wine before drinking and to declare your opinion of it. It is far better for you to drink simply, without much ceremony, for it is not appropriate to try to make yourself pass for a wine connoisseur.

When drinking, you may lower your head a bit so as not to spill any drops on yourself, but you must at once lift your head; however, it is still better to hold your head up when you drink.

Do not drink too slowly, as though sipping and savoring the wine, or too quickly, as sensual people do. Drink slowly and deliberately, but all at one draft, without stopping for breath and not taking several sips. When drinking, keep your eyes resting on the glass, and always drink all that is in the glass.

Decorum does not permit you to drink bareheaded; you must always have a hat on when drinking. Do not permit your eyes to wander or to gaze from side to side during this time, but keep them fixed on your glass. When drinking, do not make any sound with your throat, giving others an opportunity to count how many swallows you take.

It is unbecoming after drinking to heave a great sigh to regain your breath. Stop drinking without making any sound, not even with the lips. Immediately after drinking, wipe your mouth, as you also ought to have done before drinking.

It is very impolite to drain the wine bottle to the last drop; it is equally so to suck up the last drops from a glass. You must also take care not to drink too often and not to drink wine undiluted. Propriety requires that you mix plenty of water with your wine.

It is contrary to decorum to start to drink while the person sitting next to you is drinking; you must especially refrain from drinking while the most notable person present is holding his glass in his hand. You must wait until these others have drunk.

While you are answering a question from a person of higher rank, if he puts his glass to his lips, you must wait until he has finished drinking before continuing your reply. You must do the

same no matter who is drinking; never speak to anyone while he is drinking.

To present to anyone a glass of wine that you have already tasted is very rude. To propose a toast to the health of one and all in order to get them to drink more is a practice that comes out of a tavern; it is something that refined people never do. Do not even drink too readily to the health of one person or another, unless you are in the company of very intimate friends and you do this as a token of friendship or reconciliation. Children especially must not drink to the health of anyone, unless they are told to do so.

Do not drink to the health of a person much higher in rank than you are. If sometimes this might be permitted, you must not do so while addressing the person in question whose health you are toasting, saying, for instance, "My lord, this to your health!" Instead, address the toast to someone else, saying, "Sir, will you join me in drinking to the health of my lord. . . ?" It is still more impolite for you to add the surname of the person of rank or his title when toasting him or in drinking to the health of his wife or one of his relatives, saying, "My lord, to the health of your spouse or of your brother or of your sister!" You must name a woman by the title or the surname of her husband and others by their own surname or their title, if they have one, saying, for example, "To the health of Madame Louvier. . . ," "of his honor, the President. . . ," "of the Councillor. . . ."

When you drink to the health of a person present, bow very courteously toward him. If you are the one whose health is being toasted, thank the person who proposed it by bowing as low as his rank demands; then propose his health, making a slight bow without taking off your hat.

If a person of a rank higher than yours drinks to your health, remain with your hat off and bow slightly toward the table until the one who has proposed the toast has finished drinking. You must not toast him unless he suggests it. This, however, is something that ought not to happen if the person offering the toast is not of a much higher rank than the other.

Article 10: **How To Leave the Table; How To Set and To Clear the Table**

Do not wait until you have a full stomach before you stop eating. Just as it is refined for you to eat only with moderation, it is also polite for you to stop before you are completely filled.

Children must always leave the table first, taking off their caps and making a bow.

If you are obliged to get up and to leave the table before the others, do so only after taking off your hat. If you are a dependent or a domestic, you must not get up without taking up your plate or having someone else take it for whom this would not be inappropriate.

If you and someone to whom you owe respect are the only ones remaining at the end of a meal, out of courtesy you must stay with him until he rises, as long as you are someone to whom he must show consideration and are not a dependent or a servant.

Those who serve at table must always have clean hands and must not wear a hat while doing their work. Their task consists, first, in spreading the tablecloth neatly on the table. Then they put down the salt dish and lay out the plates on which they put the bread, which is covered neatly with a napkin, provided that no soup bowls are to be put down. If they are, the bowls must be put on the plates, with the knife, fork, and spoon arranged on the right, below the bread. A napkin is then spread over everything.

The glasses must then be washed, placed on the buffet or on a small table, and covered with a white cloth, so that they will not be carelessly touched. When mealtime comes, care must always be taken that everything needed is ready: salt, bread, and bread plates ought to be on the table or very neatly laid out on a nearby buffet.

The servants must then help the guests wash their hands in a ceremonial manner. The servants carry the pitcher in the right hand and have a napkin folded lengthwise on the left shoulder. They must hold the bowl at the bottom, resting it on the left hand and arm, unless it is already set on a table. Water ought to be poured over the hands of the most distinguished guest first, then over those of the others in due order of rank. Sometimes no special order need be observed, which must always be the case when the people present are not especially distinguished.

One of the first things those who serve at table must pay attention to is to wipe the bottom of the dishes carefully, especially the soup tureen, so that the tablecloth will not be soiled. The different dishes ought to be so arranged that each guest can easily reach them with a spoon or a fork as the need arises.

Bread must always be served on a plate or wrapped in a napkin if there are no clean plates left on the sideboard. Never give bread to a guest by hand or serve it on the side next to the most distinguished person present.

The servants must always be ready to provide whatever may be asked for; for this reason, they must always keep an eye on the table and not stray far from it.

If you are serving at table, you must not wear a hat; this is particularly important when serving beverages. When doing this, you must hold, in your left hand, a glass by its stem or a cup by its handle, not in the palm of your hand or with your fingers touching the edge. Wine must always be poured into the glass before presenting it. When you offer it to the guest, gesture as though kissing the glass; slowly pour in some water from the water pitcher or pot, which is held in your right hand. Do not stop pouring until the guest lifts his glass slightly to signal that he has enough.

Decorum requires that no drink be presented to anyone until the guests have had time to eat some of the food and their soup plates have been removed. Always offer the beverage first to the most distinguished person in the group. Always take care to offer it from the side of the person being served, but if there are several people at table, serve nothing to anyone from the side next to the most notable person, unless it is absolutely impossible to do otherwise.

When serving wine, if you put too much in the glass, do not pour it back into the bottle or other container; it must be emptied into another glass. If you did not serve enough, more ought to be added until the guest has enough.

When you serve a drink to someone other than at mealtime, give the person the glass first, holding a napkin or a plate under it to prevent any drops from falling on his clothes. Once he has drunk, take the glass from him with a gesture as though kissing it, while at the same time presenting him a folded napkin with which to wipe his lips. You must also put a clean plate under the glass when a person of high rank drinks during a meal.

People who wish to dine properly change the plates at least twice during dinner, once after having had the soup and again before dessert, but at supper, only for the dessert. In the houses of the aristocracy and at banquets, all plates are ordinarily changed for each new course, and a clean plate is always available on the sideboard for anyone who might need one. It is also proper for you to get another plate yourself when you need one.

Those who serve and who change plates must always begin with the most distinguished guest in the group and then go on to the others, giving them clean plates as they take away soiled ones.

When you are at table, always behave with great reserve, not looking fixedly at people who are eating or at what they eat. Be careful that nothing is wanting to those who are at table and that they are not obliged to ask repeatedly for something to drink. For this reason, the servants must be very alert to see that nothing is missing and to be very prompt in serving the guests.

It is against decorum to start removing the plates while someone is still eating; wait until the guest makes a sign to remove his plate, either by pushing it away or in some other manner. Do not remove any dish without replacing it by another, for it is not appropriate for the table to be empty before the end of the meal.

Do not pile dishes one on top of another to remove them more quickly, especially if there is still food on them. They ought to be entirely empty, nor must the food remaining in one dish be mixed with that from another, so that they can be removed all at one time. The dishes must always be removed one at a time, so that not more than two are carried away at once.

When removing serving dishes from the table, you must always begin with those in front of the highest ranking person in the group. The same rule applies for removing the plates, which must be taken away as soon as the serving dishes are removed.

The table must not be entirely cleared until after the grace after meals has been said. When you do clear the table, it is proper to put the knives, forks, and spoons in a basket and also to put with them the pieces of bread that might be left over. It is shameful to pick up and hide meat, wine, or anything else so that you can eat or drink it in secret.

The salt ought to be removed last of all. Once the tablecloth is picked up, the table must have a special cover, unless the table too is to be taken away.

When everything has been removed, the room must be carefully swept to gather up the crumbs and other things that might have fallen from the table. After this the fire must be stirred up if it is winter; then the servants bow and withdraw.

If you are to light the way for your guests, you must not take merely a bare candle to do this; use a candlestick. Hold it in your right hand while keeping your hat in the left, and so lead the way for the guests.

It is very impolite for you to extinguish the candles in the presence of the guests. Decorum requires that this never be done when others are present and can see it done, and care must be taken also that the candles do not smoke. It is even more rude to extinguish a candle with your fingers. Always use the extinguisher when you take the candlestick from the table.

5

Amusements

Amusements are activities in which you can spend some time to relax your mind from the serious concerns of the day and your body from the tiring tasks that occupy it most of the time.

It is quite right to take a little rest from time to time; both body and mind need this. God gave us an example at the beginning of the world, when on the seventh day he rested from all his labor, as Holy Scripture says, after spending six days in the great work of creating the world (Gn 22 [2]:2). Our Lord also invited his Apostles to rest awhile with him after they had returned from the various localities where he had sent them to preach the Gospel (Mk 6:31).

However, it often happens that in amusing yourself, you might wound your conscience or that of others, violate in some way the rules of refinement, or indulge in diversions that decorum does not permit, whether by entertaining yourself in an unrefined manner or by combining something impolite or improper with your pastimes. Therefore, it seems necessary here to make known the various kinds of recreation that you can engage in and then to explain how to enjoy them with decorum.

The amusements that you can take part in are conversation, walking, gaming, and singing. Here we will discuss these four, each in turn, and describe how to engage in them properly.

Article 1: **Conversation and Laughter**

It is a matter of decorum and civility every day after meals to take some recreation with those with whom you live and eat. It is not courteous to leave them immediately after getting up from the table.

Recreation ordinarily consists in conversing in an open, frank manner and recounting interesting, pleasant things that provide occasions of laughter and entertainment for the group. However, you must take care that these stories do not include anything vulgar or anything suggesting a lack of good education. Rather, they must be told in an uplifting manner, which ought to make the simplest tale striking, interesting, and pleasing to others.

The Wise Man says that there is a time for laughter, and no time is more appropriate than after a meal, because it is not only impossible to apply yourself to serious matters immediately after dining but also a great help to good digestion if you keep yourself in a cheerful and relaxed frame of mind following meals (Eccl [Sir] 32:4).

You are never allowed to amuse yourself at the expense of others. The respect you ought to have for your neighbor requires that you never take pleasure in anything that might cause pain to anyone.

There are three things especially that you must never make fun of: matters of religion, indecent words or actions, and the defects of others or some misfortune that might have happened to them.

Concerning religion, you would show a reckless and even an irreligious attitude to make this a laughing matter and to make a joke of it. On all occasions a Christian ought to show signs of esteem and veneration for everything that concerns the worship of God. This is why you must carefully refrain from making jokes about the words of Holy Scripture, as people sometimes do. You must never have such words in your mouth, except to use them in a Christian spirit and to encourage yourself to practice what is right and virtuous.

Decorum requires that you have a great horror for anything even remotely suggesting impurity. Far from allowing yourself to laugh and to make jokes about it, you must show that you do not find anything about the topic in any way amusing. Those who laugh about such things give proof that they live more according to the flesh than according to the spirit and that their hearts are thoroughly corrupt.

With regard to the defects of others, they are either natural or result from bad habits. If they are natural, it is unworthy of a person with good sense and good judgment to laugh at and to make fun of them, because the person who suffers from these defects is not their cause. It does not depend on him whether or not he has them, and these same misfortunes could have happened to anyone. If the defects are due to bad habits and you use them as topics for jokes, you are acting in a manner entirely against charity and contrary to the true Christian spirit, which ought to lead you to have compassion on these people and to help them correct

themselves, rather than take these shortcomings as something to laugh about.

It is no less contrary to decorum for you to laugh at and to make fun of some misfortune or accident that might have happened to someone, for this would indicate that you are giving outward expression to the happiness you feel over what has happened. Charity and propriety require that you show regret over what causes suffering to others and that you rejoice over what is pleasant for them.

It is impolite to laugh after telling a joke and to look around to see whether others are laughing at what you have said, for this shows that you think you have related something marvelous. Nor ought you to laugh when someone else has said something improper or inappropriate. To laugh at everything you see or hear is to act like a person without much sense.

Do not take the liberty of laughing on any and all occasions. You must not, for example, laugh while speaking or when you have some reason for feeling sad. Decorum does not allow laughing on certain other occasions when you ought at least to appear serious, as, for instance, when some relative has died and has remembered you in his will. Not being serious at such a time would seem to show that you are happy because this relative died.

Civility, then, requires that you do not laugh unless there is some reasonable cause for doing so, and it also prescribes certain rules to follow when laughing. It never allows you to laugh boisterously and, even less, to do so in such an abandoned or unrestrained manner that you lose your breath or are led to make unbecoming gestures. Only people with little sense, who do not know how to behave, would act in this way. For, says Ecclesiasticus, the fool raises his voice in laughter, but the wise man scarcely laughs to himself (Eccl [Sir] 21:23 [20]).

Article 2: **Walking**

Walking is a refined exercise that contributes much to the good health of the body and makes the mind more disposed to the activities proper to it. Walking becomes a form of recreation when joined to agreeable conversation.

There is usually a certain sort of ceremony regarding the order of place people take when walking together. The most honorable place belongs to the most distinguished person in the group. However, he to whom this honor is offered ought not to accept it unless he far outranks the others, and even then he must not do so until he has bowed to the others, as though thanking them for the honor done to him.

It is very impolite to claim the place of honor for yourself, unless you are indeed far more distinguished than anyone else. When people more or less equal in rank are walking together, they ordinarily take places without any distinction, just as they happen to meet.

When three or more people are walking together, the middle place ought to be given to the most distinguished member of the group. The right-hand position is the next most honorable, and the left-hand position is the third most honorable. If the individuals are of about equal rank, they can yield the middle place to one another alternately, each time they turn, the one who was in the center simply stepping aside and letting his place be taken by one of those walking with him.

In gardens and other places where custom has not indicated anything, the second place is on the right of the person who is to be honored. If you are alone with that person, you must remain on his left, and every time you reverse direction, you must again place yourself on his left, trying to do so without affectation.

In a room, the space closest to the bed is the least honorable place, provided that the arrangement of the room allows this. If it does not, be guided by the position of the door to determine the least honorable place.

On the street, the more honorable place is near the wall, but if three are walking together, the middle position is first in dignity; the wall side is the second place, and the street side is the lowest.

Those who walk together must always proceed at a moderate pace and in a straight line, especially if there are not many of them and all are of about equal rank. If someone in the group considerably outranks the others, refinement requires that they walk slightly ahead of the ranking person to do him honor, but in such a way as to be able to hear him and to converse with him.

When you walk with anyone, it is contrary to decorum to approach so close as to touch the person and still less proper to

elbow him. Do not place yourself so directly in front of someone to whom you wish to speak that you prevent him from walking or are in any way disagreeable to others.

When the group reaches the end of the walkway, it is up to the highest ranking person to be the first to turn around. He ought always to do this by turning toward the second most important person or toward whoever is talking, or he might turn alternately to the right and to the left. This is a mark of refinement on his part if the people with him are about equal in rank. All the others ought to turn toward the center of the group.

If only two people are walking together, each ought to turn inside toward the person with whom he is walking, never to the outside, for you cannot turn to the outside without turning your back on your companion, which would be extremely unrefined.

If two people of higher rank than you want you to walk between them, so that they can more easily hear the story you are telling, you must at the end of the walkway turn toward the higher-ranked person. If both people are of about equal rank, take care to turn toward one at one end of the walkway and the other at the opposite end. As soon as you finish your story, leave the middle position, and move to one side, slightly behind the others.

If walkers reach a place where it is necessary to walk in single file, each one ought to proceed according to his rank in the group, making a sign of politeness to the others. If the people are of about equal rank, they ought to walk one behind the other as they happen to arrive at the place. However, if the passage is inconvenient or dangerous, one of the less-distinguished people can go first to show the way or to test the footing; in so doing he would not infringe on any of the rules of decorum.

When you meet another group of walkers, it is very impolite to turn your attention away from your own group, for this shows little consideration for the people you are with and indicates a lack of esteem for them.

When walking with a notable person or even with an equal, it is ordinarily not a sign of decorum for you to pause, for besides the fact that this would seem to claim a certain superiority for you, it is sometimes annoying to the others. If, however, the person with whom you are walking pauses, you must also pause and take care not to move forward again as long as he remains still.

Article 3: **Gaming**

Gaming is a pastime permitted on occasion but to be engaged in only with great precaution. This is an activity to which you may devote a little time, but you must also act with due restraint, for it takes much precaution to avoid allowing yourself to be carried away by some ill-regulated passion. You must be reserved, so that you do not give yourself too completely to a game or spend too much time engaged in it. Because it is impossible when playing games to behave with decorum without these two conditions, you are not allowed to play without them.

There are two passions that you must particularly guard against, so that you do not yield to them when playing games. The first is avarice, and this is ordinarily the source of the second, impatience and fits of anger.

When you play, take care not to play in a spirit of avarice, for the game was not invented to make money but simply to be a means of relaxing your mind and body after work. That is why it is not proper for you to wager large sums. Wager only a small amount, which can neither enrich the winner nor impoverish the loser but keeps up interest in the game and makes the players more eager to win, thus contributing a great deal to the pleasure of playing.

It is very impolite to grow impatient during a game that you are not winning as you had hoped you would, but it is shameful to allow yourself to fall into outbursts of rage, and even worse to start swearing. You must behave in a sensible and peaceful manner, so that you do not disturb the game.

It is entirely contrary to propriety to cheat in a game. This is a form of theft, and if you win, you must make restitution, even if your skill also contributed partially to your winning.

The stakes that you win must not be collected too eagerly. If a player who has lost fails to put up for the game, he must be asked or urged to do so in a courteous way, reminding him simply that he did not put in his stakes. You might say, for instance, "You apparently forgot to put in your stakes." If he loses and the game continues, ask, "Would you mind putting in two stakes?" or say, "It seems there is something missing from the pot, since you did not put in the last time around." On such occasions you

must carefully avoid saying anything like “Pay up! Put in your stakes!”

Although it is proper when playing to show a very happy face, for after all, the game is played for fun, it is nonetheless against decorum for you to show excessive joy when you win or to let yourself grow disturbed, peevish, or angry when you lose. This is a sign that you are playing only to win money. One of the best means you can use to avoid falling into any of these defects is to wager only such small sums that neither winning nor losing would be capable of arousing any passion in those who play.

It is also uncouth for you to sing or to whistle while playing, even if you do so very softly and between your teeth. It is even more objectionable to drum with your fingers or your feet, yet this is sometimes done by people too absorbed in their game.

If some disagreement arises during the game, you must take care not to shout, dispute, or insist obstinately. If you are obliged to maintain some point, it ought to be done with much restraint and courtesy. Simply state in a few words what you feel is your right, without ever raising or changing the tone of your voice. When you lose the point, it is a matter of propriety to pay up immediately without waiting to be asked, for this is a sign of a generous spirit, and an honorable person always pays gambling debts without making a scene.

Never undertake to play against a person who considerably outranks you, unless this person commands you to do so. But when a person of higher rank obliges you to play against him, you must take great care not to show too much eagerness in the game or too much keenness to win, for this would indicate a small-minded and mean spirit.

If you know that the person with whom you are playing and to whom you owe respect hates to lose, you must not leave the game when you have won, unless the other person suggests it or has finally won. But if you lose, you can quite properly stop playing; this is always permitted, no matter whom you are playing against.

It is a matter of refinement to show that you are very pleased when a person to whom you owe respect wins at a game, especially when you are not playing but are only a spectator.

It is important to refrain entirely from playing if you cannot keep calm in the game, for this can give rise to many objectionable

consequences, which you must try to prevent. If the person against whom you are playing is in a bad humor, you must not show any displeasure at his words or his manner of acting, still less pay any attention to his fits of anger. Try to continue with the game calmly as if nothing were happening. Prudence and wisdom require that you take everything with equanimity and that you never lose either the respect you owe to the other person or the calm spirit you must always preserve.

It is very impolite for you to make fun of a player who has shown a lack of skill. If people of higher rank come to join in the game and you are already playing, it would be courteous to yield your place to them. If you are playing paired with a person of greater skill, two against two, and your team wins, you must be careful not to say to your partner, "We have won"; rather, say, "You have won the game, sir," or say, "The gentleman has won."

It is entirely contrary to decorum to grow overly excited when you play; nevertheless, do not play in a careless manner or lose deliberately as a way of flattering your opponents. This would make the person with whom you are playing think that you care little about contributing to his enjoyment in a well-played match.

You can play many different kinds of games. Some exercise the mind more; others afford more exercise to the body.

Games that exercise the body, such as tennis, lawn bowling, tenpins, and badminton, are preferable to others, even to those that exercise the mind and call for much mental application, such as chess and checkers. When playing games that provide exercise for the body, you must take special care not to indulge in ridiculous or unbecoming contortions. Take care not to get overheated when playing. Do not unbutton or take off your outer garments, not even your hat, for these are things that decorum does not allow.

When playing chess or checkers, it is appropriate to offer the white pieces to your opponent, placing them in front of the other person or at least making ready to do so. Do not allow the white pieces to be given to you or to be placed in front of you.

There are some games that you may occasionally play, such as piquet, in which skill counts for something and which are not games of pure chance. Other games depend much more on sheer luck, such as "Three of a Kind," "Soldier," games of dice, and others of a similar type. These are not only forbidden by God's

law, but they are not even permitted by the rules of decorum. Consider them unworthy of an educated person.

Civility also requires that the time you spend playing must be moderate and that far from playing without interruption, as some people do, you must not even play very frequently or for several hours at a time, for this would mean making an occupation out of what ought to be only a brief interruption in your employment. To do so is contrary to the good judgment that characterizes a person who knows how to behave.

Article 4: **Singing**

Singing is a recreation that is not only allowed but very appropriate. It can help you considerably to relax your mind in a very agreeable and most innocent manner.

Decorum, however, as well as religion, requires that as a Christian, you not allow yourself to sing every sort of song and that you be especially on your guard not to sing indecent songs or those whose words are too explicit or contain double meanings. In a word, it is very unbecoming for a Christian to sing songs that might lead to impiety, that glorify loose living, or that contain expressions and words suggesting that it is an honor and a great pleasure to drink to excess. Besides the fact that it is very uncouth to have these words on your lips, such words might strongly contribute to having someone else fall into such excesses, even if he is not doing so at the moment. Songs can move you with the spirit they contain more strongly than do mere words.

In two different places in his epistles, Saint Paul tells us precisely what Christians ought to sing: psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). Sing these with all your heart and with great affection, for they contain the praises of God. Such are, in fact, the only songs that ought to be heard in Christian houses, where vice and anything that might lead to it are contrary to decorum no less than to the Gospel and where nothing must be sung that is not an occasion for praising God or does not lead to the practice of goodness and the exercise of virtue.

This was likewise the practice of those Patriarchs of old who composed canticles only to praise God or to thank God for some favor they had received from him. David, who composed a great

many canticles, dedicated them all to the praise of God. The Church, which adopted them as her own, sings them daily and places them in the mouths of Christians on the days when we solemnly assemble to worship God. She invites us also to sing these canticles often, even in private, and recommends that parents teach them to their children.

Because these holy canticles have been translated into our language and adapted to music, everyone can sing them conveniently and easily. They can readily be learned, and they fill our minds and hearts with the sacred sentiments that they contain. It ought also to be a great pleasure and a genuine recreation for Christians to bless and to praise God in this way in their hearts.

Refinement requires that if you know how to sing or to play an instrument, you not make this known, show any sign of this talent, or speak of it to gain esteem for yourself. But if this ability becomes known and in a gathering someone to whom you owe respect or deference asks you to play or sing, whether to show what you know or to entertain the group, ordinarily you can courteously excuse yourself, and it is even right to do so. If the other person persists and urges you, it would show that you do not know the ways of society if you still hesitated to sing or to play as you have been asked to do. For if it happens that your singing is not particularly good or that you are not especially skillful on the instrument, the others in the group might well say afterward that you had no reason to make people beg to hear you. By acquiescing in a courteous way and without too much delay, you forestall all such criticism, or at least you do not cause it.

When you are obliged to sing in a gathering, you must avoid coughing or spitting. Be very careful not to praise yourself, saying, for instance, “Here comes a lovely passage”; “Here is another even lovelier”; “Pay attention to this tremolo. . . ,” and so forth. This sounds too much like vanity and conceit, and it may be that perhaps you overrate your ability. It is against decorum to make certain gestures that show you are conceited; the same thing would apply when you play an instrument.

When you are requested to sing or to play an instrument, be careful not to keep playing too long, for you must avoid boring the audience. Finish soon, so that you give no one the occasion to say or think, “That’s enough!” However, it would be very rude for you to say anything like that if another performer deserves special

consideration. It is also very impolite to interrupt someone who is singing.

You must take care not to sing to yourself or to hum between your teeth; this is quite rude, whatever the occasion is. It is just as rude to mimic a singer because he sings through his nose, because of the inflections of his voice, or because his way of behaving is improper and disagreeable. This is to act like a buffoon and to play the clown. It is also extremely uncouth to sing in a manner that is vulgar, affected, or exaggerated. If you want to sing well and agreeably, sing in a completely natural manner.

Article 5: **Amusements That Are Not Permitted**

There are amusements that will not be discussed at length here, because they are not at all permitted to Christians, either by the laws of religion or by the rules of decorum. Some of these are ordinarily available only to wealthy people, such as balls, dances, and the comedies of the theater. There are others that are more commonly available to artisans and the poor, such as watching charlatans, clowns, tightrope walkers, puppeteers, and so forth.

With regard to balls, suffice it to say that they are gatherings where behavior is neither Christian nor refined. They take place at night, for it seems that people want to hide from themselves the unbecoming things that take place. They prefer to engage in them under cover of darkness, so as to feel free to do what is wrong.

People who host such gatherings are under an obligation to open the doors of their houses to everyone without distinction, which causes their homes to become like infamous public places, where fathers and mothers expose their own daughters to all kinds of young men who are free to come to the gathering. They take the liberty of looking over the people present, single out those they like best, speak to them, dance with them, flatter them, and take all sorts of liberties with them that the parents would be ashamed to allow in their own homes. The young ladies, by the extravagance and vanity shown in their dress, by the lack of modesty in their glances, gestures, and their total person, offer themselves to the eyes and to the desires of all those who come to the ball, and they provide an occasion, even to those who are the most

controlled, to experience feelings that are far from what Christian decency and propriety allow.

As for the dances that are held in private homes with less extravagance, they are as much against decorum as those held with more pomp in regular ballrooms. If a pagan of old said that no one dances when he is sober unless he has lost his mind, what can a Christian attitude inspire us to see in a form of amusement that Saint Ambrose says is fit only to arouse shameful passions and in which decency loses all its luster in the midst of all the noise that people make hopping around and abandoning themselves to dissipation (*Book 3, De Virginibus*)? This great father also says that one can expect shameless and adulterous mothers to let their daughters dance, whereas chaste mothers, who are faithful to their husbands, would teach their daughters to love virtue and not dancing. Dancing, says Saint John Chrysostom, dishonors the body by the shameful and unbecoming posture people assume, while the soul is even more dishonored (*Sermon 48, On Saint Matthew*). These dances are the devil's games. Those who seek amusement and pleasure in them are Satan's ministers and slaves. They act like animals rather than like human beings, because they abandon themselves at such times to brutish satisfactions.

Although in the world theater is considered a refined form of amusement, the fact is that it is a shame and an embarrassment to Christianity. In fact, are not those who abandon themselves to this kind of work and make it their profession considered publicly infamous? Can you love a profession that covers with embarrassment those who practice it? Is that art not something infamous and shameful in which the skill of the actors consists in exciting in themselves and in others various shameful passions for which a wellborn person can feel nothing but repulsion? If there is singing going on, the only airs one hears are those that strengthen these same passions. Is there anything conformable to refinement or to decorum in the costuming, the nudity, and the license taken by actors and actresses? Is there anything in their gestures, their words, and their postures that is not unbecoming for a Christian not only to do but even to see? It is, then, entirely against propriety to take pleasure in this form of amusement.

The booths of charlatans and clowns ordinarily set up in public squares are considered improper places by all respectable people.

Ordinarily, only artisans and the poor stop to watch the performances. It would seem that it is especially to entrap such people that the devil promotes them. Although these people cannot afford to taste the poison he uses to ruin their souls at the theater, they do, however, easily fill themselves with poison at these public booths. It is for this purpose that the devil makes use of the clowns, trains them, and sends them, as Saint John Chrysostom says, like a pestilence that is spread wherever they go (*Sermon 6, On Saint Matthew*). No sooner, says this great Father, do these ridiculous buffoons come out with some blasphemy or some indecent expressions than the silliest of the spectators burst into loud laughter and applaud the actors for things that they ought to be stoned for uttering.

This is, then, such a shameful form of amusement, so truly detestable a pleasure, that as the same Saint says, those who take part in these spectacles and those who watch them show that their hearts and minds are very low indeed and not in the least Christian.

Nor is it any more appropriate for a Christian to watch marionette shows, in which there would be nothing entertaining or amusing if they did not bring in words either insolent or indecent, along with postures and movements entirely unbecoming. This is why a sensible person ought to look on such spectacles only with contempt and why fathers and mothers must never allow their children to attend them. They ought to inspire the youngsters with great horror for them as being contrary to what decorum, as well as Christian piety, requires of them.

Propriety does not allow you to be present at the performances of tightrope walkers, who every day risk their life as well as their soul simply to amuse other people. They ought to be neither admired nor watched by reasonable people, for they do things that everyone, even those following the mere light of reason, ought to condemn.

6

Visits

Article 1: **The Duty That Decorum Imposes on You To Make Visits; the Frame of Mind You Must Have When Visiting**

Living in the world as you do, you cannot excuse yourself from paying visits from time to time and from receiving them. This is an obligation that decorum imposes on all laypeople.

Even the Most Blessed Virgin, although she lived a very retired life, paid a visit to her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1:38 [39]). It would seem that the holy Gospel relates this in some detail precisely to have this example serve as a model for us. Jesus Christ also paid visits several times out of simple charity, for he was certainly not obliged to do so.

To understand clearly and to ascertain correctly the occasions when you ought to make a visit, be convinced that Christian decorum must be governed in this matter only by justice and charity and that it obliges you to make visits only out of necessity, to show someone a token of your respect, or to cultivate union and charity.

Occasions when decorum, founded on justice, dictates visiting would be, for example, when a father has a sick child or a child a sick parent. Each is bound to visit the sick person in order to give all the help that Christian piety and justice, as well as decorum, require.

If someone feels hatred or aversion toward another person, the rules of the Gospel require that one must visit the other to reconcile their differences and to live entirely at peace with each other (Mt 5:23–24).

Christian decorum is inspired by charity when during a visit you contribute to the salvation of a neighbor in whatever way possible, render him some temporal service, pay him your respects if you are of a lower rank than he is, or maintain a truly Christian union with him. It was always for one or the other of these reasons and with some such motive in mind that our Lord Jesus Christ acted in all the visits he made. He did so to convert some soul to God,

as when he visited Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1); to raise the dead to life, as when he went to Saint Martha's home after the death of Lazarus (Jn 11) and accepted the invitation of the chief of the synagogue (Mt 9:19 [18]), and to cure the sick, as when he went to Saint Peter's house (Lk 4:38) and to the centurion's (Lk 7:1). He performed all these miracles only to win hearts to God or as a token of friendship and goodwill, as in the last visit he made to Saint Martha and Saint Mary Magdalene (Jn 12:1).

It is not proper, then, if you seek to live a wise and a well-regulated life, for you to be out visiting continually. As the Wise Man says, it is a sad life if you have to go from house to house and make a large number of useless calls, as some people do (Eccl [Sir] 2:31 [29:24]). It also means wasting precious time that God has given you only to enable you to merit heaven.

You must also be careful in visiting not to stay too long, which ordinarily is boring or disagreeable to others.

With regard to the people you visit, make sure that they are not living dissolute or scandalous lives and that nothing in their conversation suggests impiety or a disregard for religion. Decorum does not allow you to have any dealings with such people.

When you propose to visit some person for whom you ought to have much esteem and whom you must respect, be careful to put on clean linen and proper clothing, which is a mark of respect. You must also plan what you wish to say during the visit.

If you are entrusted with a message for the person you are planning to visit, you must pay great attention to what you are told. If you do not hear the message clearly or do not understand it, you must admit this politely and, excusing yourself, have the message repeated or explained more clearly. It is, however, more appropriate to act in such a way that you never have to ask anyone to repeat what has just been told to you.

Article 2: How To Enter the House of the Person You Are Visiting

When you go to call on someone and find the door of the house shut, it would be very impolite to bang on it or to knock more than once. Knock gently, and then wait patiently until someone comes to open the door.

To knock at the door of a room would show that you are ignorant of common courtesy. Merely tap on the door, and if no one comes, move away, so that you are not discovered and thought to be eavesdropping or spying, which would be most offensive and very unbecoming.

When the door is opened and the person opening it asks your name, give it without calling yourself *Monsieur*.

If you are visiting a person of much higher rank and he is not at home, it is contrary to decorum to give your name. Merely say, "I will come back at some other time."

If you are a total stranger in the house you are visiting, it would be brazen to enter by yourself without having someone admit you. You must wait to be invited before entering, even if the door is open. If there is no one to invite you in and it is reasonable to think that you may freely enter, you must enter without making any noise, and you must not push the door open too wide. You must also take care, on opening or closing doors as well as when walking, to do so very quietly and without noise.

It is very rude, when you have opened a door, to leave it open. You must close it carefully if no one is there to do so.

While waiting in a room or in an antechamber, it is contrary to decorum to walk about; this is forbidden in the homes of the nobility. Under no circumstances may you hum or whistle.

It is a matter of refinement to remain with your hat off in waiting rooms and antechambers, even when no one else is there. When visiting a person of eminent rank, take care never to wear a hat or to sit down with your back turned toward his portrait or toward that of anyone who has a right to your respect.

It would be impolite to wear a hat when entering a place where there are people of distinction or who deserve esteem. You must always take your hat off before entering such places.

If the person you are visiting is busy writing or doing something else, it is not courteous to interrupt him. Wait until he stops of his own accord. Nor is it courteous for you to rush into a place where a number of people are engaged in some work together, unless it is a pressing matter that obliges you to interrupt or unless you can enter without being noticed.

When you enter someone's room and the person is not there, do not wander around the room or examine what it contains. You ought to withdraw immediately and wait in the antechamber.

If there are any papers, writings, letters, or similar material on the table in the room, it is impolite to look at them out of curiosity. On the contrary, you must turn away quickly and avoid even glancing at them.

Article 3: **How To Greet the Person You Are Visiting**

The first thing you must do upon entering the room of the person whom you are visiting is to greet him and bow. This was also the first thing, according to the Gospel, that the Most Blessed Virgin did when she went to visit Saint Elizabeth (Lk [1]:39).

You can greet someone in one of three different ways. The manner for ordinary situations is to remove your hat first, with the right hand, and lower it with your arm fully extended. Let the hat rest, turned outward, on your right thigh, and leave your left hand free. Second, look gently and politely at the person you are greeting. Third, drop your glance, and bow. Fourth, if you wish to move forward, begin by moving the right foot forward; if you wish to withdraw, move the left foot back. If you are passing someone you wish to greet, first move forward and toward his side; then, as you pass in front of him, turn slightly toward him and offer a greeting.

If you wish to greet an entire group of people, slide your right foot forward to greet the most distinguished of those present; then draw your left foot to the rear and, turning from side to side, greet all the others present.

You must never enter any place without greeting those who are already there. The one who enters ought to offer greetings first, addressing those already present.

This is also what you must do when you make a visit, even though the one you visit is inferior in rank. This is what the Most Blessed Virgin did with regard to Saint Elizabeth. If you are receiving a visit, you ought to anticipate it somewhat and go forward to greet the visitor. If he is of high rank or deserves special respect, it is conformable to decorum to welcome him at the door. If you have been advised of his coming, you may meet him outside to give him greater tokens of respect. This is what Saint Martha and Saint Mary Magdalene did, as the Gospel tells us, when Jesus Christ

went to visit them and raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn 1:2 [11:20]). The same honor was shown by the centurion when Jesus was going to his house to cure his sick servant.

The second manner of greeting someone is used in the course of a conversation. This is what is ordinarily called a polite salutation, which includes simply taking off your hat, bowing slightly, and taking a slight step forward if you are standing.

The third manner of greeting is for special situations. It is used when someone comes in from a distance or when taking leave of someone before he departs on a journey. This manner of greeting resembles the first somewhat, but you must take off your right glove and bow deeply, letting your hand graze the ground. Then you bring your hand up slowly to your lips, as though kissing it. Then you straighten up slowly and carefully, for the person you are greeting might also have bowed in turn and, wishing to embrace you through politeness, might be hit by your head. When you greet someone in this manner, you must bow down all the more deeply in proportion to the higher rank of the person you are honoring.

Another special manner of greeting someone is to embrace the person whom you have approached. This is done by putting your right hand on his left shoulder, and your left hand below the right shoulder. Each of you then turns his left cheek to the other but without touching it or kissing it.

A kiss is still another form of greeting, but a kiss is ordinarily exchanged only by people who are very close to each other, such as relatives or very special friends. The kiss was much used in the early Church among the faithful as an outward sign of their deep union and perfect charity. Thus Saint Paul exhorts the Romans and all the others to whom he writes to use this greeting.

The bow you make when greeting someone must not be merely a nod but low and deep. Make it without affectation and without assuming an unbecoming posture, for instance, turning your head in an uncouth way, making bodily contortions, stooping too low, or remaining too straight. It is unbecoming for you, when speaking, to bow at every word you say.

It is against decorum to ask, "How are you?" when greeting people above you in rank, although it would make no difference with anyone else. Unless the people you are greeting are ill, you

ought to ask such questions only of friends and people of equal rank. A person of higher rank, however, may ask this of someone who is below him in dignity or who is his inferior.

It is very rude for women and girls who are wearing a mask to greet anyone while veiled. They must always lift the mask first. It is also most impolite for a woman to go into the room belonging to a person to whom she owes much respect with the fringe of her dress tucked up, with a mask on her face, or with a bonnet on her head, unless the bonnet is made of transparent material.

Article 4: How To Present Yourself to the Person You Are Visiting; How To Sit Down; How To Get Up

When you enter a person's room and there are other people present who are speaking with him, you must not approach him. Remain close to the door until the people who are talking have finished or until the one you are visiting comes forward or makes you a sign to approach.

It is impolite when approaching a person, whether it be someone you are visiting or someone you happen to meet, to shout out in a loud voice, as some people do, "Good day, sir! I am your servant!" Wait until you are close before addressing him, and speak in a normal tone of voice.

As soon as you enter, offer your greetings while remaining standing. Continue standing until the more distinguished people present are seated, for it is not appropriate to sit down or to remain seated while others to whom you owe respect are still standing. Nor is it polite to sit down before the person you are visiting tells you to do so or makes a sign to that effect.

If you are visiting someone of eminent rank or a person for whom you ought to have much esteem and respect, neither sit down nor put on your hat unless the other expressly invites you to do so. If he does, you must obey, making some little external sign to show that you do so only by reason of the respect you owe him. In sitting down, be sure to place yourself below him, to take a less distinguished chair, and to place yourself neither next to him nor too close but rather on the far side, not, however, directly opposite him but somewhat to one side, because this way

of acting is more respectful. You must not keep your eyes fixed on the other party or approach him too closely, for fear of touching him, breathing on him, or being in any other way disagreeable to him.

So that you can distinguish and choose among chairs, it is worth mentioning at this point that the most honorable seat is an armchair and that among armchairs the most comfortable one is to be preferred. After an armchair, the most preferred is the high-backed chair, and next to it, the folding chair.

If you are entertaining friends at home, you ought to give the first places to your equals. When you are not at home, you must never accept the first place unless it is offered to you two or three times.

When you take a seat on a garden bench or near the fire to warm yourself, the middle is the place of honor; the seat on the right is next, and the one on the left is third.

When people are sitting in a room, the place closest to the window is ordinarily the most honorable one, and the place nearest the door is the least honorable.

When you are in a room, it is very unbecoming to sit on the bed, especially on a lady's bed. It is always very inappropriate and shows an intolerable familiarity to throw yourself on a bed and to carry on a conversation from there.

In visits and in conversations, it is a matter of decorum to conform your behavior to that of the person you are visiting and not to try to seem too different. It would be entirely contrary to the respect you ought to have for those present to remain seated when they stand, to keep on walking when they stop, and to read or, worse still, to fall asleep while they are talking.

It is also a matter of refinement for you to be considerate of others and to adapt to their ways in everything that is not forbidden by the law of God. You are never permitted to violate God's law out of consideration for anyone or to approve the wrong that you may see libertines commit. On such occasions you must either leave the gathering or, by the reserve and gravity of your countenance, show signs of the displeasure that you feel at such conduct.

Article 5: How To Bid Farewell and To Take Your Leave after a Visit

When visiting someone of higher rank or when you notice that the person you are visiting has something to attend to, you must not stay until he is obliged to dismiss you; it is always better to withdraw of your own accord. It is a good time to leave when the other person remains silent, calls someone, or gives some other indication that he has something else to do.

You must not leave a group without bowing and saying good-bye to the company. However, if you are with some person of very high rank and someone else speaks to him immediately after you do or if he turns away to apply himself to some other business as soon as he has spoken with you, it would be proper to leave without saying anything more and without attracting any attention. If you leave alone, you must open and shut the door quietly without making any noise, and you must not put on your hat until after you have closed the door.

When leaving a person whom you have been visiting, avoid giving him the trouble of accompanying you to the door. You must not, however, refuse this honor too strongly, and if the person insists on coming, remain with your hat off during this time, and give the other person a token of your gratitude by making a profound bow. If it is someone of much higher rank who moves as though to perform this honor for you, do not try to prevent him. This might indicate that you think that he does not know what he is doing, or you might make the mistake of refusing something that the other person had not intended to do for you. Let him come as far as he wishes, and in leaving, thank him politely, making a deep bow.

On such an occasion, however, you might make a sign to show that if you are the object of this honor, you assume that it is not meant for you. You could do this by going on your way without looking behind you, or by turning around and stopping as though to let the person who accompanies you pass, thus showing that you think he is on some business elsewhere. If it is clear that it is to you that the other party is trying to show this courtesy by accompanying you to the door, pause, step aside, and wait until he has returned to his room.

When the person you have visited accompanies you outside the street door, do not mount your horse or enter your carriage in his presence; beg him to go back inside before you leave. If he chooses to remain outside, start off on foot, allowing the carriage to follow or leading the horse by the bridle, if you have come by horse, until the other person has gone back inside or until you have lost sight of him.

Article 6: **How To Act When Receiving Visitors**

In your own home, never make a visitor wait, unless you are engaged with people of a rank higher than that of the visitor or you are busy with public affairs. It is quite uncivilized to let someone wait at your door or in the courtyard, the kitchen, or an alleyway. If you are obliged to make someone wait, you must provide a clean place where this visitor can sit comfortably if he desires. It would be a matter of decorum to send some courteous person, if possible, to keep him company while he is waiting.

You must set everything else aside to receive someone who comes to visit. If the person is someone of higher rank or someone with whom you are not well acquainted, change from your dressing gown, and take off your nightcap. Leave your meal aside, and if you ordinarily wear a sword, buckle it on, or else put your mantle over your shoulders.

As soon as you are informed that someone to whom you owe much respect is visiting, go to the door, and if the person has already come in, go as far as necessary to meet him. You must show him as much honor as possible, bringing him in, making him sit down in the finest room, letting him precede you everywhere, and giving him the most honorable place. This is the sort of honor you must pay in your home, not only to people of higher rank but also to anyone else who is not a servant or your own inferior.

However, when you are visited by a person of high rank or by one who is much superior to you and this person shows that he would prefer that you omit some of the acts of deference due to him, you must not obstinately continue them. Decorum requires

that you then make it clear by your entire submission to his wishes that he has all power in your house.

If the person who visits surprises you in your room, you must get up immediately, if you are seated, leave everything aside to pay him honor, and not return to what you were doing until he leaves. However, if you are in bed, you ought to remain there.

In your own home, you ought to give the most honorable place even to those who are your equals, but you must not urge an inferior to take a place that he cannot accept without failing in his own duty.

It is impolite to let visitors remain standing; offer them the most honorable and comfortable seats at once. If there are chairs of varying degrees of distinction and comfort, the best ought to be presented to the person of highest rank. You must also show these individuals more tokens of respect than the others. You must not sit down until the visitor has taken a seat, and you must occupy a less honorable chair than the one the visitor occupies.

If someone comes into your home during a meal and enters the dining room, it is courteous to invite him to stay and to eat, but it is also a matter of decorum, if the host is at table, for the visitor to decline very politely. Just as the host is not obliged to insist, neither is the visitor obliged to accept, and so both ought to let the matter rest at that.

In visits and in conversations, especially when receiving visitors, you must never show that you are bored with the company, for example, by asking what time it is. If, however, you have something urgent to attend to, you may adroitly mention this in the course of the conversation.

Politeness requires that you anticipate the needs of those you are with, especially visitors, by offering to be of service in any way you can. For example, when they are leaving, you ought to open doors for them, remove whatever might be in their way, lift a curtain, ring a bell, knock on a door, pick up something they might have dropped, or bring a light. If your guest has difficulty in walking, it is polite to offer him a helping hand. Everyone ought always to anticipate the needs of others in these and similar situations, but when you receive visitors, you have a special obligation to act in this way toward your guests. You would be considered very rude if you omitted these duties of hospitality.

When visitors leave your house, accompany them beyond the outer door of the building. If the person who is departing has to get into a carriage, do not leave him until he has done so, and in the case of a lady, you must assist her to get in. However, if you are a person holding some public office, for example, a royal official, a city dignitary, a lawyer, or a magistrate, that is, someone who might be quite busy, you may refrain from accompanying callers to the door. At the same time, it would be proper for the visitor to urge the host not to leave his room or office.

If you have a group of guests and if some are leaving before the others, accompany to the door the people who are leaving, if they are more important than those remaining. If the people leaving are less important, remain with the others; nonetheless, offer your apologies. If your visitors are more or less of equal rank, it is proper to decide who, all things considered, deserve most consideration or to whom you are most deeply indebted. Then accompany or remain with the ones who have the greatest claim on your consideration.

If any young people have been left at your house, it is not proper to send them home alone, especially after nightfall. If it is some distance to their home, take them home or entrust them to some reliable person for this purpose.

Article 7: **How To Act When You Join or Leave a Group**

When you are entertaining friends and someone arrives for whom you must show esteem and who is of higher rank than those with whom you are, humbly ask the group's permission, and then leave the group to greet the visitor. If this person is of lesser rank, you must not leave the group but merely rise when the guest comes in and bow or show some other mark of politeness. On such occasions when the newcomer is deserving of some honor, the other guests ought to stop their conversation, game, or whatever else they might be doing, rise and bow, and remain standing and with hats off until the newcomer is seated. Decorum requires that you offer the visitor the place suited to his rank. As head of the house, you must inform him in a few words about what was being discussed

or done prior to his arrival, or else the one who had been speaking ought to do so.

If a person arrives who wishes only to speak to someone in the room, you may allow him to enter. When he comes in, the one to whom he wishes to speak ought to rise and, standing and with his hat off, listen to him, even if the visitor is only a servant who is speaking for a person for whom respect is due.

When someone leaves the group and departs, all ought to rise and make room for him to pass. When the group has bowed to him in the manner due his rank, you, as head of the household, ought to ask the group's permission to accompany him, if he outranks those who remain behind; otherwise, you must simply offer your wishes to the one who is leaving, without leaving the others. It is not always a sign of decorum to leave your guests in order to escort someone who is departing.

On entering and on leaving a group, do not walk through the middle of the group, in front of those who are already there. Having bowed to the company, pass around them, if possible. If this cannot be done easily, you may pass through the group, excusing yourself and bowing a little to salute those present.

When you enter a place where people are already gathered and they rise and offer you a polite greeting, you must bow to them. Do not take the first place or that of another person, and do not allow any of the group to bring you a chair. Instead, take the last place, and, if possible, choose a seat lower than those occupied by the others. If, however, they oblige you to take a more honorable place, you must not stubbornly refuse, especially if in the group there is no one of much higher rank than you.

When you leave a group, do so in a very courteous manner without allowing the conversation to be interrupted or the activities to stop. Do not allow the others to get up or the head of the household to leave his place to accompany you, unless in all propriety you absolutely cannot prevent this.

7

Meetings and Conversations

People who come together in society often have things to discuss, so they are frequently obliged to converse with one another. As a result, conversation is an activity for which decorum prescribes many rules; they require Christians to be extremely circumspect in their words, as Saint James advises (Jas 3). The Wise Man demands that this circumspection be so great that while acknowledging how much people of the world esteem gold and silver, he declares that the control you exercise in your words ought to surpass the natural instinct people have for hoarding their wealth (Eccl [Sir] 28 and 29). He says that people ought to melt down their gold and silver to make a balance with which to weigh their words. No doubt he is right, for as the Apostle Saint James says, you can be sure that you are perfect if you commit no fault when speaking (Jas 3:2). You must also be persuaded that whoever does not offend against decorum by words truly knows how to live properly in this world and displays wise and well-regulated external behavior.

This circumspection requires that your speech be regulated by certain conditions, which the following articles will discuss.

Article 1: Qualities That Decorum Dictates Must Accompany Your Speech

Decorum requires that as a Christian, you never utter a single word that is contrary to the truth or to sincerity or that shows disrespect for God or lack of charity for your neighbor. Your words ought to be necessary or useful and spoken with prudence and discretion. These are the characteristics that decorum requires must accompany all that you say.

Section 1: The Truth and the Sincerity That Decorum Requires in Speech

Refinement cannot abide that you would ever say anything false. On the contrary, it exacts, as Saint Paul advises, that each one must

speak the truth to his neighbor (Eph 5). According to the Wise Man, refinement regards falsehood as a shameful flaw and the life of a liar as a life deprived of honor and always threatened by embarrassment (Eccl [Sir] 20:26–28 [24–25]). Likewise, according to the Wise Man, it is in accord with refinement that lies, even if told out of weakness or ignorance, do not fail to bring shame upon the liar (Eccl [Sir] 4:30 [20:24ff]).

In the same vein, the Royal Prophet, also instructed in the rules of decorum as he was in true piety, says that if you wish to live a life of happiness, you must keep watch over your tongue, so that you speak no falsehood (Ps 31:12–13 [see Sir 20:23ff]), while the Wise Man wishes you to look upon lying as something so detestable that even the thief, he says, is preferable to the habitual liar, for the lie is always found in the mouths of vicious people (Eccl [Sir] 20:26–27 [23–24]). You might say that even if you fall into no other vice, frequent lying is enough to push you quickly into a vicious life. Jesus Christ explains why this is so when he tells us that the devil is the father of lies (Jn 8:44).

Because lying is so shameful, whoever yields to it even slightly is acting totally contrary to decorum. Thus, it is not courteous, when someone questions you or when you are speaking to anyone, to use equivocation or words with a double meaning. Rather than trying to equivocate, it is ordinarily more appropriate to excuse yourself politely from answering when it is clear that you cannot say plainly what the truth requires or what you think. The Wise Man says that a devious tongue draws down embarrassment (Eccl [Sir] 5:17 [15ff]). Saint Paul also condemns this in clerics when he says that equivocation is not to be tolerated in them.

You must be particularly circumspect in your words when someone entrusts you with a secret. It would be very imprudent to divulge it, even if you urge the one to whom you repeat the matter to keep it to himself and if the person who confided the secret to you failed to ask you not to mention it to others. For, as the Wise Man says so correctly, if you reveal the secrets of a friend, you lose all credibility and will soon be unable to find any close friends (Eccl [Sir] 27:17 [16]). He considers this fault to be much worse than to speak injuriously to your friend. As he says, even after harsh words, reconciliation is possible, but if you have been base enough to betray a friend's secrets, there can remain no hope of

reconciliation, and you will try in vain to recover the lost friendship (Ecc1 [Sir] 27:23–24 [19–21]).

It is also a great act of incivility to try to mislead a person whom you ought to respect. This indicates a lack of the confidence and the consideration you must show to a friend. It is not at all courteous for you to play the hypocrite with anyone and for this purpose to use some manner of speaking or some terms that he cannot grasp unless you explain them to him.

It is most uncouth in company for you to speak to one person in particular and then to make use of expressions that the others cannot understand. You must always speak openly to the whole group, and if you have something to tell someone in private, wait until that person is apart from the rest. If the matter is urgent, withdraw together to some place more isolated, after asking leave of the group to do so.

Because it often happens that people relate incidents that are not true, be extremely careful not to repeat these tales too readily, unless you know them yourself or have it on good authority that they are true. Never tell from whom you got this information if you have reason to think that the author would not be pleased to have this known.

Make an effort to be so sincere in what you say that you will earn the reputation of being entirely truthful, a person whose word can be counted on, a person people can rely on. This is also a piece of advice that the Wise Man considers very important: he urges that we keep our word and deal faithfully with our neighbor. Nothing is more honorable for you than the sincerity and fidelity that you show in keeping your promises, just as nothing makes you more worthy of contempt than breaking your word.

Just as it is a matter of honor to be faithful in your words, so it is very imprudent to speak lightly without having seriously considered whether you will be able to keep your promises. For this reason, never make a promise without carefully weighing the consequences to make sure that you will not have to regret it later on.

If it happens that others do not believe what you say, do not take it too much to heart. Still less must you allow yourself to fall into fits of exaggerated impatience leading to harsh words and reproaches. People who are not convinced by your reasons will certainly not be persuaded by outbursts of passion.

It is shameful for you to make use of fraud and deceit in your words. Those who do this will soon find that they are no longer believed by others and that they have won for themselves an infamous reputation for dishonesty.

Because dreams, as the Wise Man says, are nothing but the products of our imagination, it is never appropriate to tell others your dreams, however beautiful and edifying you think they are (Eccl [Sir] 27:14 [34:1–7]). Only a person with a weak mind would want to do this.

Section 2: How You Violate Decorum When You Speak Against the Law of God

Some people seem to glory in displaying their irreligious spirit in what they say by mingling the words of Holy Scripture with profane things, by mocking and making fun of sacred things and religious practices, or by bragging about the sins and infamous deeds they have committed. These are the very people of whom the Wise Man says that their conversations are intolerable, because they make a game and a joke of sin itself (Eccl [Sir] 27:15 [13]). Such conduct is also totally against decorum.

Cursing and blasphemy are among the greatest faults you can commit against the laws of decorum. This is why in polite society a person who swears is considered lower than a mule trainer and why people have such low esteem for him. Ecclesiasticus, giving us an admirable illustration of what is proper according to the rules of decorum, says that the words of the inveterate curser make the hair on your head stand on end and that on hearing such horrible language, you ought to cover your ears (Eccl [Sir] 23:12 [27:14]). In an effort to get those who swear to stop this habit, Ecclesiasticus warns them that sorrow will never leave their home and that their house will always be filled with affliction (*ibid.*, 23:10[–11]).

Following the Wise Man's advice, therefore, take care not to have God's name constantly on your lips, and do not use the names of the saints in conversation, even if you do this only thoughtlessly, from mere habit, and without any evil intention. You must not pronounce the name of God and of his saints irreverently and without good reason. It is never appropriate to mingle in your ordinary talk such words as "Jesus!", "Mary!", and "Oh, my God!" It is not even becoming to use certain exclamations that mean

nothing, such as “By Jove!”, “What the devil!”, “By heaven!”, and others. Words like these must never be found on the lips of a wellborn person. When you use such an expression in the presence of people toward whom you are obliged to show esteem, you offend against the respect due to them. According to the opinion of the Wise Man, you cannot excuse yourself on the pretext that when you swear, you harm no one, for this excuse, as he remarks, does not justify you before God (Eccl [Sir] 33:14 [23:9–14]).

You must limit yourself, as Jesus Christ advises you in the Gospel, to saying, “This is so,” or, “This is not so” (Mt 5:5 [37]). If you wish to add some emphasis to your words, it is sufficient to say, for example, “I assure you, sir, that this is how it is,” without adding anything more.

You must entertain no less horror for indecent words than for swearing, for they are no less contrary to civility and often are more dangerous. Saint Paul desires that the Christians of his day act on all occasions with decorum. He warns them in several places in his epistles to take special care lest any indecent word escape their lips. He expressly forbids them among themselves even to mention fornication (Eph 4:29). It shows a lack of respect to use dirty language. To amuse your companions, you must never use language that is even a little too free, not even under the pretext of joking and playfulness, for, says Saint Paul, if you wish to be agreeable to others when speaking, you must say something that can edify (Eph 5). In this matter, even double-meaning words are not permitted, for you would offend against politeness as well as against propriety. The same can be said of words that suggest, even in the slightest degree, some indecent idea or image.

When you happen to be in a group where some of those present use language that is a little too free or that wounds decency even in a slight degree, you must be very careful not to laugh. If you can, pretend not to have heard; at the same time, try to turn the conversation in another direction. If you cannot do this, you must show by your seriousness and deep silence how distasteful you find this kind of talk.

It can be said that you make your real self known by the sort of language you use, for, as Jesus Christ declares, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Mt 12:34). Using language that is filthy and that shocks people’s sense of decency is one way of letting them know how impure and corrupt you are.

Section 3: **Faults Against Decorum Committed When You Speak Against the Charity Owed to Your Neighbor**

Civility is so demanding in what refers to your neighbor that it does not permit you to scandalize anyone in any way and never allows you to speak ill of anyone. This is also something that Saint James warns the early Christians to be contrary to God's law, when he tells them that whoever slanders his brother slanders the law (Jas 4:11). It is, then, very rude to be forever finding fault with what others do. If you do not wish to say anything good about them, you ought to say nothing. The Wise Man declares that when you hear slander, you must hedge your ears with thorns, and he adds that you must keep so far away from slander that you never hear an evil tongue (Eccl [Sir] 28:8 [28 Douay]).

Nor does he allow you to report to people the tales that someone else has related about them, and he warns you not to acquire the reputation of talebearer, because, as he says, the talebearer will be hated by everyone (Eccl [Sir] 19:7, 10; 5:16; 21:31 [25–28]). Thus, according to the same Wise Man's counsel, if you have heard something unfavorable about your neighbor, you must, if you wish to act with decorum, let the story be buried in your own heart (*ibid.*, 19:[9–]10).

When you hear someone spoken ill of, civility requires that you try to excuse his defects and to say something good about him, by showing him in a favorable light and by speaking with appreciation of something he did. This is the way to acquire the affection of others and to make yourself agreeable to all.

It is quite rude for you to speak inconsiderately about the deficiencies of an absent person, especially in the presence of others who might suffer from the same deficiencies, saying, for example, "She has such a tiny head" in the presence of someone whose head is small, or "He limps" in the hearing of someone who is lame. Words like these offend those present as well as those absent. Indeed, it is most improper to call attention to the physical defect of anyone; this shows that you are mean and poorly brought up.

It is also rude to make comparisons between the person to whom you are speaking and someone else, so as to bring out some defect or misfortune that happened to that other person, saying, for example, "He was as drunk as you were the other day"; "So-and-so got a slap or a bloody nose as bad as the one you got

a few days ago”; “So-and-so fell into a mud puddle like the one you fell into the other day,” or, “So-and-so has hair as red as yours.” To talk this way is to offer a grave insult to the one to whom you are speaking. Nor ought you to refer to obvious defects or blemishes on a person’s face or to ask how they got there.

It is also offensive to attribute insensitively to the person to whom you are speaking some action that might be inappropriate, indiscreet, or unkind. Instead of speaking in this way, you must not connect the matter with anyone in particular. For instance, instead of saying, “If you say anything unkind, you will get your ears boxed,” say, “There are some people who, if something unkind is said to them, box the other person’s ears.”

It is also quite rude, as well as a great fault against charity toward your neighbor, to remind someone of events in which he did not do well or to say things that can disturb or embarrass the person you are speaking to, such as “You got into an ugly mess a few days ago” or “The other day you were grossly insulted.” In speaking to a person who wishes to appear young, you are out of place to recall how long it has been since you made his acquaintance or to tell a woman that she looks terrible.

An insult is most shocking to decorum as well as to charity. Our Lord very expressly condemns it in the Gospel. Such words must never be found on the lips of a Christian, for they are extremely improper for anyone who has the least claim to being a well-educated person. You must never insult anyone, and you are never permitted either to say or to do anything that might lead to such conduct.

Another fault, no less contrary to propriety and to the respect you owe your neighbor, is mockery, making fun of someone over a defect or a weakness or mimicking him by gestures. There is not much difference between such mockery and an outright insult, except that by insulting people, you attack them flagrantly, with no attempt at concealment. Such mockery is entirely unworthy of a wellborn person. Because it goes against propriety and hurts your neighbor, you are never to make fun of anyone, living or dead.

If it is not permissible for you to make fun of a person because of some weakness or defect, it is even less so to make fun of his natural and involuntary handicaps. It shows a slovenly and mean spirit for you to make fun of someone, for example, because he has

only one eye, is crippled, or is humpbacked. Surely the person who suffers from these defects did not cause them. It is also entirely improper for you to poke fun at someone because of a misfortune or a disgrace that has overtaken him. You wound him deeply by making fun of him in his tragedy.

However, if you are the butt of sarcasm because of one of your defects, always take it in good part, and do not show exteriorly that it bothers you. It is a mark of refinement, as well as a sign of piety, not to let yourself be disturbed by what others say about you, however disagreeable, offensive, or insulting it might be.

There is another type of joking that is allowed and which, far from being contrary to the rules of refinement and decorum, adds spice to conversation and brings honor to the person who employs it. This joking is part of witty, spirited repartee, which deals with something agreeable without wounding anyone or offending courtesy. Such fun is very innocent and can make a conversation much more interesting. However, take care that it does not occur too frequently and that you know how to handle your wit. If you tend to be somewhat clumsy when attempting to be witty, you ought to abstain from this sort of thing entirely, because people might laugh at you, and this sort of joking, now so pointless, uninspired, and uninteresting, would not achieve the end you intended, namely, to amuse others and to get them to join in the fun.

To carry out this sort of light exchange, you must not play the fool, laugh about everything for no reason, or tell a few low, pointless, and worn-out jokes. What you say must show some brilliance and refinement, something appropriate to the quality of both the speakers and those who listen with so much interest to what is said.

Section 4: Faults Against Decorum Committed Through Inconsiderate, Thoughtless, or Useless Talk

To speak without consideration means to speak without discretion, without control, and without paying attention to what you say. The Wise Man warns us that to avoid this defect, we must be very attentive to our words, so that we do not dishonor our soul (Eccl [Sir] 19:38 [20:8 Douay]).

In fact, no one has any esteem for a person who speaks indiscreetly. For this reason, you ought to be on guard, according to

the advice of the same Wise Man, against being too quick with your words ([Ecc] 4:34 [Douay]), because the reason why you speak inappropriately and without control is that you often say things without having thought seriously about them. But the same Wise Man, knowing so well the evil effects of this vice, asks God not to abandon him to thoughtless indiscretions in speech. He begs God to assist him, calling to mind God's power and the goodness that God has shown him as Father and Lord of his life ([Sir] 23:1ff).

If you wish to speak with discretion and prudence, you must never speak before thinking carefully about what you intend to say. You do not have to reveal all that is on your mind, and in many things you must act, according to the Wise Man's advice, as though you were ignorant (Eccl 32:12 [Douay]). He adds that if you are well informed about something you wish to talk about or someone else is talking about, you may speak or give answer appropriately; otherwise, you ought to keep your hand over your mouth ([Sir] 5:14). This means that you must keep silent, lest you be surprised into an indiscreet word or fall into embarrassment.

To speak prudently, consider whether it is the proper time to speak or to remain silent. It is imprudent and thoughtless, as the Wise Man warns, for you not to pay attention to the right time for speaking and instead to talk when you are prompted by just the mere desire to talk.

It is necessary, according to Saint Paul, that you make sure that every word you utter be so saturated with grace and seasoned with the salt of wisdom that you never utter a single word without realizing why and how you are saying it (Col 4:6).

Finally, as the Wise Man recommends, you need to learn before you speak; therefore, never discuss a topic without knowing a great deal about it, so that you will say what you have to say so wisely and so appropriately that you will make yourself more highly esteemed because of your words (Eccl [Sir] 18:[18–19]; 20:31 [29 Douay]).

When someone has said or done something that is out of place and you notice that this person spoke without reflecting and is already aware of it and embarrassed when he thinks of himself and of what he said, you ought to pretend to have noticed nothing. If he excuses himself, it would be prudent and charitable for you to interpret the incident in a favorable light. Never poke fun

at someone who proposed something a little unreasonable, and still less ought you to treat him with disdain, for it may be that you did not correctly understand what he had in mind. Finally, it is never proper for an educated person to embarrass anyone.

It is prudent, when someone is using insulting language, for you not to reply in kind and not to undertake to defend yourself. It is better to pretend that you take the whole thing as a joke, and if someone else comes to your defense, you ought to show that you are not upset by what was said. It is characteristic of a truly wise person never to be upset by anything.

To let us know in a few words who the people are who speak with wisdom and prudence and who those are who speak imprudently, the Wise Man gives us this admirable rule: the hearts of fools are in their mouths, and the mouths of the wise are in their hearts (Eccl [Sir] 22 [21]:26). This means that those who lack good sense let everyone know by the proliferation and the thoughtlessness of their words whatever they have in their heart, but those who have common sense and self-discipline are so reserved and circumspect in speaking that they say only what they want to say and what is proper for people to know.

When you are with people older than you or with the very elderly, it is a matter of decorum to speak little and to listen a great deal. You ought to act in the same way in the company of important people. This advice that the Wise Man gives you is most appropriate indeed (Eccl [Sir] 32:13 [9]). It is also a matter of refinement that a child, when in the company of people to whom he must show respect, speaks only when he is invited to speak (*ibid.*, [32]:11 [7]; 19:5 [Eccl 32:10–13 Douay]).

You must be very careful not to reveal secrets to one and all. This is a piece of advice given by the Wise Man that would be quite imprudent to ignore. Before revealing a secret to anyone, you must make sure who the person is to whom you intend to tell the secret, whether he is able to keep the secret, and whether he will indeed do so.

Those who have nothing to relate except gossip and frivolous, silly stories and those who affect introductions so long that no one else can speak would do much better to keep quiet. It is far better to gain a reputation for being a person of few words than to bore people with nonsense and stupidities or always to have something to say.

Article 2: **How To Speak of People and Things**

It is exceedingly rude to speak of yourself all the time, comparing your behavior with that of others and saying, for instance, “As for me, I never do that sort of thing”; “He never does as I do”; “A person of my rank would never do such and so,” and so forth. Talk of this kind is boring and indiscreet. It is never appropriate to compare yourself with others or others with one another; such comparisons are always odious.

Some people are so full of themselves that they are always telling those with whom they converse what they themselves have done or are doing, letting others know how highly prized their own every word and action must be. For you to carry on this sort of conversation would be most disagreeable and burdensome to others.

To brag or to speak highly of yourself is something that seriously violates decorum, besides being the mark of a small mind. A wise person never speaks about himself, except to answer a question. Even then he does so with great moderation, modesty, and reserve.

When you tell of something you have done or something that happened when you were in the company of a person much higher in rank than you, it is uncouth to speak in the plural, saying, for instance, “We went here or there. . . .”; “We did this or that. . . .” On such occasions, you must not praise yourself or even speak of yourself. It is more refined to speak of what occurred as though you had not been present, saying, “He did this or that. . . .”; “He went to such and such a place.”

When, as an inferior, you speak of something that a person to whom you owe respect did for you, it is not proper for you to say bluntly, “He told me this. . . .”; “He came to see me. . . .” Instead, use these or similar phrases: “He was kind enough to tell me. . . .”; “He did me the favor of coming to see me. . . .” Again, you may address the person in question, saying, “You, sir, were kind enough to. . . .”; “You took the trouble to do me the favor of. . . .”, and so forth.

Refinement requires that when you have to speak of others, you always do so in a favorable manner. This is why you ought to speak only of people you know and only if you have something good to say of them. There is no one, however bad, that you cannot say something good about. It would not be appropriate, however, to

Speak well of someone who has committed some public fault or some infamous deed. On such occasions it is better to keep silent, and if others feel free to speak, you must show that you feel compassion toward the culprit.

You must also make it clear by your words that you esteem others. For this reason you must not only be satisfied with speaking well of them but also take care not to do so coldly. When saying something that is to their honor, you must not add something else that would make the person lose all the esteem he might have gained from what you just said.

You must always speak in a respectful manner about the person you are discussing and in terms that show much deference to him, unless this person is of lower rank, but even then you ought to use courteous expressions to show that you have due consideration for him.

When you wish to summon someone, decorum does not allow you to do so by shouting on a stairway or through a window. You would fail in respect for the people in whose company you are if you took such a liberty. Instead, send someone to get the person you are summoning, or go yourself.

If you are with a person to whom you owe respect and this person wishes to find someone else, do not allow him to make the search himself. Courtesy requires that you personally tender this service promptly.

When you greet a person of higher rank, it is uncivilized to ask him how he feels, unless he is sick or indisposed. Such a question would be proper only in the case of people who are equal to or lower than you in rank.

If you wish to show someone to whom you owe much respect that you are happy to find him well, you must, before approaching him, find out from a servant how the person is. Then, when you meet him, tell him courteously, "I am very happy, sir, to see that you are in such good health."

When asked how you feel, you ought to reply, "Very well, thank God, and ready to pay you my very humble respects," or use some similar expression that you might think of.

Decorum does not allow you to complain when you are with others and are suffering from an ailment or are indisposed. Such a complaint would be a bother to others; sometimes people complain to have things more readily made easy for them.

In company some people speak only of what they like or of things they particularly cherish. If they are fond of a dog, a cat, a bird, or some other animal, they make these pets the constant subject of their conversation. They even speak to their pets from time to time in the presence of strangers, occasionally interrupt conversations for this, and often fail to pay attention to what others are saying. Such ways of acting are signs of pettiness and a narrow mind and are contrary to the rules of decorum and to the respect due to those with whom they are conversing. This sort of conduct is intolerable in wellborn people. Because these attachments are so commonplace, it is most improper to take such delight in them and to make a display of them with so much ostentation.

There are other people who, if they have gone on a trip, concluded some piece of business, or had something favorable or unfavorable happen to them, never stop talking about what happened or about what they saw, heard, or did. They seem to think that if these matters are pleasant for them, they would be pleasant for everyone else. This is a sign that they are full of themselves and that they experience complacency in everything that refers to them or to what happens to them.

Article 3: **Different Modes of Speaking**

There are many different modes of speaking that give expression to our various emotions and inclinations. These modes of speech are praising, flattering, questioning, answering, contradicting, giving an opinion, disputing, interrupting, and correcting.

Section 1: **What Decorum Prescribes with Regard to Praise and Flattery**

It is always uncouth for you to praise yourself and to brag. This is not appropriate, because as a Christian, you ought to make yourself known only by your deeds. Only your actions must speak for you. You must never speak of yourself to say either good or evil.

When being praised, you ought not to exhibit marked delight, for this shows that you like to be flattered. Instead, you ought to excuse yourself in a refined way, saying, for instance, “You embarrass me. . . .”; “I only did my duty. . . .” It would be even better

and wiser to say nothing at all and simply to change the subject; this would not be a breach of civility. If a person much your superior praises you, bow to him courteously, as though to thank him, and then remain modestly silent, for to reply would show a lack of respect for him.

When you hear a person being praised, decorum would suggest that you add something to what has been said or, at the least, that you express your agreement with it. Take good care not to start comparing this person with someone else.

Although you ought never to praise another person in an exaggerated way, it is always in keeping with decorum if you do so with moderation and without making any comparisons. You must also be careful not to praise others in the presence of their enemies.

When in company, if you have some reason to praise your relatives, you may do so, provided it is done with sobriety and moderation. When a relative is praised in your presence, do not agree too much with the compliments, but it is in keeping with refinement to express your gratitude to the one who makes the compliments.

When you give a present to someone, it is contrary to decorum to praise it to the skies, as though encouraging the receiver to show even deeper appreciation for it. If others praise the object, you may say that you wish it were even more beautiful and so more in keeping with the merits of the person who received it. It would be very rude to remind someone later of a good deed you did for him, for this would seem to imply something of a reproach.

On the contrary, however, it is entirely in keeping with refinement to manifest your esteem for a present you have received. It is not appropriate to put it away immediately, and it would be a great mistake for you to find fault with it, especially in the presence of the donor. If you act in this way, you deserve never to receive another gift.

When you show another person or a group some object worthy of esteem, it is not appropriate to admire it excessively or to rave about it, as some people do. This might suggest that you do not have a very high opinion of the person who owns the object, that you have not seen much, or that you know little about the true value of such objects. Do not, however, be totally indifferent if the object is valuable. You must at the same time be both modest and fair.

If something is being shown to a group in which you are, it is not proper to try to be the first to praise it. Wait until the best-qualified person in the room has given his opinion, and then you can second him courteously and deferentially. Of course, if this person first asks you for your opinion, it is always in keeping with decorum to express your views simply and without exaggerating.

You ought to act in the same way on all occasions in which you are obliged to give an opinion on the value of a thing or an action. But you must avoid using exaggerated language, exclaiming over everything you see, "Oh, how beautiful this is, how wonderful!" This is especially true when you are in the presence of a person to whom you owe great respect, one who has not yet had a chance to express an opinion. That would be to impose your judgment and to show a lack of respect.

To flatter is to say something good about someone when you have no reason for doing so or to say more than is warranted out of a mere desire to please or to forward your own interests. This is a slovenly way to act. It is always hurtful to you if you permit yourself to be flattered, for it shows that you are small-minded and very presumptuous, allowing yourself to be praised for things that cannot be attributed to you in either a Christian or a reasonable manner.

Article 4: How To Question, To Inquire, To Correct; How To Give Your Opinion

It is quite uncivil to ask questions of a person for whom you ought to have esteem or even of any other person, unless he is lower in rank than you and depends on you or unless it is necessary to get information. In that case, you must do so in a very courteous manner and with much circumspection.

When you wish to learn something from a person to whom you owe respect, it is a matter of decorum to speak to him in such a way that he is prompted to respond without your directly questioning him. For instance, if you wish to know whether a person is going to the country or to this or that place, it would be very impolite and against the respect due to him to ask him point blank, "Sir, are you going to the country?" This is offensive and too familiar a way of talking. You ought to make use of other ways of raising the

matter, such as, “No doubt you are planning on going to the country or to this or that place?” This manner of circumlocution is in no way offensive, although it does show curiosity, which, when it is respectful, is easily excused.

It is also ill mannered when you are speaking to someone to ask, “Do you hear me?” “Do you understand?” or to say, “I am not sure that I am explaining myself properly.” Get to the point without making use of such ways of speaking.

When you come into a group, it is very rude to start asking what has been going on or what has been said. Such questions are too familiar and show that you do not know how to behave properly. Once you have taken your seat, you must be satisfied to listen to whoever is speaking; then try to enter the conversation in an appropriate way.

During a conversation, do not ask personal questions or try to find out, no matter how courteously you may do so, where the person has been, where he comes from, or what he was doing or wishes to do. Such questions are too personal and are not at all allowed. You must not ordinarily ask questions about someone unless you have a special obligation to find out something about the person you are questioning or about something referring to him.

You are both uncivil and imprudent if you interrupt a person who is asking a question by answering before he has finished speaking, even though you already know quite well what he wants to say.

You are also uncivil to be the first to reply to a person to whom you owe respect, when that person asks something in the presence of others who are of higher rank than you, even if it is only a question of ordinary and everyday things. For instance, if this person asks what time it is, let the more distinguished members of the group answer; however, if the questioner directs his query to someone in particular, that person must give the answer.

It is rude and disrespectful, when answering your parents or any other person, to say simply, “Yes” or “No.” You must always add some respectful term, such as “Yes, father,” or “No, sir.” Still, be careful not to repeat these words too often, for this would be disagreeable and boring to everyone.

If when answering you are obliged to disagree with someone for whom you ought to have esteem, it is not appropriate to do so bluntly. You ought to make use of some circumlocution such as,

“Forgive me, sir, but. . . .”; “I beg your pardon, sir, if I dare to say that. . . .”

When a group is discussing some point, it is uncivil for you to give your opinion unless you have been asked for it, especially when higher-ranking people are present.

If you are obliged to give your opinion in a group, wait for your turn before speaking. Then, taking off your hat and bowing to the one who is presiding and to the rest of the group, simply state what you think about the matter.

When giving an opinion, you must be careful not to maintain it stubbornly, for you ought not to be so sure of your ideas as to think them incontrovertible. It would also be very unseemly to argue in order to make your opinions prevail, for you must not be so firmly attached to your ideas that you refuse to yield to those of others. You must be very careful not to grow angry or abusive in order to force others to adopt your point of view. It is neither courteous nor wise to use emotion to make others accept your position as reasonable, nor must you ever blame others or ridicule what they have said. You show the characteristics of a well-mannered person when you esteem and praise the ideas of others and state your views only because you were asked to give them.

Article 5: What Decorum Permits or Does Not Permit with Regard to Discussions, Interrupting Others, and Responding

Saint Paul warns his disciple, Saint Timothy, not to waste time in disputes over words ([2 Tm 2]:14); nothing is more contrary to the rules of decorum. Thus, as the Apostle would have it, you must avoid all foolish and useless questions, because they only give rise to disputes (*ibid.*, 22 [23]).

If you wish to prevent a dispute, you must do away with its occasions. Indeed, Saint Paul tells you that you ought not to argue, because as a servant of God, you must not be contentious (*ibid.*, 24).

When you are in company, you must be on your guard not to contradict the statements made by others and not to propose anything capable of stirring up controversy. If others put forward

anything that either is not true or seems inappropriate, you may simply express your opinion with so much deference that those who think differently will not take offense. If someone contradicts what you have said, you ought to show that you willingly submit your view to his, unless it is altogether contrary to Christian maxims and the rules of the Gospel. Then you would be obliged to defend what you have advanced. This you must do, however, in so refined and reserved a manner that the person you are contradicting, far from taking offense, will willingly listen to your reasons and accept them, unless he is entirely stubborn and unreasonable. A soft word, the Wise Man says, wins many friends and mollifies enemies (Eccl [Sir] 6:5).

If you happen to be with a person who readily contradicts what others say, decorum requires that you be reluctant to express your opinions on any subject, for, as the Wise Man says so truly, promptness in arguing lights the fires of anger (ibid., 28: [12–]13). Great talkers are usually prone to defend their positions with the greatest stubbornness, so you must, following the advice of the same Wise Man, never argue with a voluble person, lest you fuel his fire (ibid., 8:[1–]4). You must, above all, be careful, as the Wise Man further counsels, never to contradict the word of truth in any way (ibid., 4:30 [25]). If you are not well versed in a given subject, prefer to keep quiet and to listen to others.

When you are engaged in a conversation in which an argument develops, as ordinarily happens in academic circles, you must listen attentively to what the others say. If you are asked or urged to speak, you may then give your opinion on the topic under discussion, but if you do not understand the matter, do not be ashamed to excuse yourself.

If you believe that the opinion you have set forth is correct, you must defend it, but this ought to be done with such moderation that the person arguing against you may yield without embarrassment. If the reasons the others adduce show that you are wrong, you must not stubbornly continue upholding a lost cause. With good grace be the first to admit that you are wrong. This is the best way to emerge from the discussion with honor.

When you are in a discussion like this, you must not be determined to win at all costs. It is enough to set forth your ideas and to back them up with solid reasons. You ought to have enough

consideration for others to be willing to go along with their opinion when they are in the majority.

It is not in keeping with decorum for you to contradict anyone, unless he is much beneath you in rank and says something inappropriate and you are obliged because of the consequences to affirm the contrary of what he has said. If so, do this in such a mild and courteous way that the one who is corrected may be forced, as it were, to be grateful to you.

It is quite uncivil for you to interrupt a speaker by asking, for instance, “Who is that?” “Who said so?” “Who did that?” Such an interruption is even more impolite when the speaker is using innuendo.

It is also a very shocking offense against civility to interrupt someone who is telling a story and to try to tell it better yourself. When someone has begun to tell a story, it is no less rude to say that you know all about it or that you know exactly what the speaker wants to say. If the narrator does not tell the story well, it would be mocking him and giving him reason to feel seriously offended if you smiled as though to show that it was not as he says. It is disgraceful to declare openly, “I bet it did not happen like that.” Such a manner of speaking is entirely rude and improper and would be used only by a person poorly brought up.

If it happens in the course of a conversation that someone makes a mistake, you have no right to call his attention to it, for example, if he mistakes one man or one town for another. You must wait until the speaker catches the error himself and corrects it. If he brings up the subject in another connection, you may point out the mistake to him; otherwise, he might be embarrassed. However, if it is a question of something that you must make clear for the sake of someone else, you may point out what the facts are, provided that you do so in a very courteous manner and very circumspectly.

Pay close attention to what the other person is saying, so that he is not obliged to repeat it. It would be very impolite to say, “What are you saying, sir? I did not hear you,” or something similar.

When a speaker has difficulty finding the right words or hesitates, it is entirely contrary to respect and to propriety for you to suggest words or to add the words the speaker has not pronounced properly. You must wait until asked to do this.

You must not take it upon yourself to reprimand anyone, unless you are obliged to do so or the matter is important. It is a serious fault to set yourself up as critic and public censor. You ought to judge everyone favorably and not concern yourself with the actions of others, unless you are responsible for their behavior and are bound to instruct them and to lead them to do what is right.

However, when you are advised or reproved by another, it is a matter of decorum to receive the admonition graciously and to show much gratitude. The more gratitude you show, the more you will act like a true Christian and the more highly you will be regarded.

If it happens that someone insults you, it would be acting like a prudent person not to be offended by it. Far from wanting to defend yourself, say nothing at all. It is a sign of a mean and slovenly spirit if you cannot endure an insult; a Christian ought not to show any resentment or even experience any. The Wise Man advises you to forget all the slights you might experience from your neighbor (Eccl [Sir] 10:6). Jesus Christ wants you not only to pardon your enemies but also to do good to them, no matter what wrong or displeasure they have caused you (Mt 5:44). If anyone offers to defend you, let him know that you were not at all offended.

Article 6: Compliments and Improper Ways of Speaking

There are several ways of giving compliments. One is by expressing the emotion of joy over something fortunate that has happened to someone you meet or visit or by showing a person who has experienced misfortune signs of the sorrow you feel over his plight. You may thank someone for the benefits you have received from him and express the gratitude you feel toward him by assuring him of your affection, faithful friendship, and devotedness. You may declare that you are entirely committed to someone and are faithfully devoted to his service. Sometimes a compliment might even be a way of complaining and showing your resentment over some wrong done to you.

These favorable compliments ought to be offered in a natural and easy manner, without any affectation and without any ap-

pearance of having been prepared beforehand, for what the lips utter out of the abundance of the heart will sound much more convincing than anything you might have said after careful preparation, which, being less natural, will never be equally well received.

Another type of compliment is direct praise. This requires you to show much more circumspection and skill than do the other kinds, in order to convince people of your sincerity. To make compliments of this sort acceptable, people whom you are praising must be persuaded that you are convinced of their merits and that the compliment is sincere and heartfelt. You must not praise people too far above their real merits, and you must not exaggerate, for this is counterproductive. Praise will be reasonable if you base it on sincerity and truth, so that thanks to the honesty, wisdom, and moderation that your words manifest, modesty may not be offended, either in you who speak or in the one who is being praised. This is why you must remember that although you ought to esteem others highly, you must praise a person with moderation and with much caution and restraint. The Wise Man recommends, with reason, that no one ought to be praised until after his death, for in praising people, there is always the danger that the one who gives praise may fail against sincerity and that those who receive it may make it a pretext for vanity ([Ecc] 11:30 [Douay]). This is why compliments of this kind ought to be rare and must be given only with much prudence and circumspection.

Compliments, to be worthwhile, must be given without flattery. If they are to be acceptable, any ceremonies accompanying them must not depart too much from what is natural or normal. They also ought to be short, and if you are offering them to people to whom you owe respect, it would be better for you to multiply respectful bows than to make long speeches.

When replying to compliments, you must follow similar rules. If they have been offered to you because of favors granted, minimize the favors without, however, reducing them to nothing, for this would make it seem as though you were finding fault with the esteem shown by the recipient. You also ought to avoid saying that you would do the same for anyone else, for this would imply that you have no very special consideration for the person for whom you did the favor, for you did for him what you would be ready to do for everyone.

When you speak, always use words that are in common usage, easily understood, and fitting for the topic under discussion. Do not use specialized and far-fetched terms.

You must especially avoid improper expressions that are not good French and that violate the purity of the language. Although it is not appropriate to speak in terms and expressions that are too remote from common usage, you also ought to avoid using slang, which some people use only because they do not pay enough attention to the way they speak. It would, for instance, be incorrect to say, “Drag that nag out of the stable,” rather than, “Lead the horse out of the stable, please.”

When you tell a story or report on an assignment, avoid using ridiculous and altogether useless phrases, such as “And he said this. . . .”; “She said that. . . .”; “Now then, he told me about it this way. . . .,” and so forth.

It is uncivilized and shocking for you to tell a person, “You broke your word to me”; “You fooled me.” It is proper to find a way to express yourself in other terms that are more polite, saying, for instance, “Apparently you either did not remember, sir. . . .”; “I suppose you were unable to do what you had promised me.”

It is also very uncivil, after someone has affirmed something, to say, “Sir, if what you say is true, we are in a bad way”; “If what the gentleman says is true, we need not be surprised if. . . .,” and so forth. That would be a kind of sarcasm. Never show that you question what a respectable person has said. It would be more polite to say, “According to what you have told us, sir, we are in serious trouble”; “What the gentleman says shows that. . . .”

It is bad to say, “You are joking when you say that,” nor is it any better if you say, as some do as though paying a compliment, “You are making fun of me by treating me this way.” Such expressions are offensive; you must never suggest that a respectable person is making fun of you. You ought to look for a way to recast the sentence, such as, “You might be making fun of me if . . . ,” and so forth.

You are never allowed to speak to anyone in a haughty tone, unless he is very much lower than you in rank. Ways of talking that suggest a domineering tone are not to be endured and cannot be used, however limited a person’s education. For this reason, instead of using expressions that imply a command, such as “Get out of here!”;

“Come here!”, “Do this!”, and the like, it is advisable to use circumlocutions such as, “Would you be kind enough to leave?”; “Would you be willing to say?”; “I don’t know whether you would be willing to. . . .”; “May I dare ask of you, sir?”; “Might I hope that you would care to. . . .?”, and so forth.

When speaking to people who are much lower than you in rank, you might ask them kindly, “Would you please do this for me?”; “Might I ask you to do me this kindness?”; “You would render me a great service if you. . . .” All these are forms of expression that courtesy suggests be used in dealing with those from whom you might need some assistance.

8

How To Give and To Receive Things; How To Act When Meeting Someone and When Warming Yourself

Before receiving some object, except food when you are at table, you ought to make a bow, remove your glove, kiss your hand, and receive the object, which you then gracefully and slowly bring close to your mouth, as though you wish to kiss it. Do not bring it all the way to your lips, but simply act as though you did so.

When you wish to hand or to return something to others, offer it promptly, so that you do not make them wait, and present it as though with a kiss. After giving it to them, kiss your hand, and make a bow. Do the same every time you present something, whether or not you have been asked for it.

When you wish to give or to receive some object, it is impolite to put out your hand toward the other person, especially if he is someone for whom you ought to show esteem and respect. Always pass things behind other people, both at table and elsewhere, unless you cannot do so without inconveniencing others. If you are obliged to pass or to receive something in front of someone, it is courteous to excuse yourself or to ask permission by saying polite words, such as, "Sir, with your permission, please. . . ."; "Please, sir, excuse me. . . ." and so forth.

When presenting anything, it is a matter of decorum to do so in such a way that the other person can take hold of it in an easy and proper way. If you are presenting a knife or a spoon, for example, turn the handle toward the other person.

If someone in your group drops something, civility requires that you hasten to pick it up before he does and then give it back to him courteously. If you let something drop, pick it up right away, without allowing anyone else to take the trouble of doing so. If someone else has been quicker and gives it back to you, thank

him courteously, begging his pardon for the trouble you have caused him.

On the pathway, when you meet someone of distinguished rank, quality, or position, it is a matter of decorum to greet him very courteously; do not turn in an exaggerated manner toward him, unless he is a very close friend.

In Paris people ordinarily greet with a bow only those whom they know and who are of eminent rank much above the ordinary, such as princes and bishops. It is, nevertheless, in keeping with refinement to pay this mark of respect also to religious and to other ecclesiastics.

It is impolite, even ridiculous, for you to watch people passing by, in order to see whether they will greet you. You must always be the first to offer greetings, as well as in other matters of courtesy, as Saint Paul advises, for you honor yourself when you honor others.

When you come face to face in the street with some distinguished person or someone superior to you in rank, it is proper to step aside a bit and to pass him by taking the side nearer the gutter.

If there is neither a higher nor a lower side but just a flat or level path, you ought to pass on the left of people you meet, leaving them free on their right side. As they pass, you ought to stop and greet them respectfully, making a deep bow if their rank demands this.

If you meet such a person near a doorway or in some rather narrow passage, you must stop at once to let him pass, if possible. If a door is to be opened, a curtain to be lifted, or something to be removed that hinders the passage, politeness requires that you go ahead of the other person in order to do these things. As you pass before him, you ought to bow slightly.

If on the street you meet a person with whom you are not acquainted, it would be taking an unwarranted liberty and committing a breach of courtesy for you to ask him where he is going or where he has come from.

When you are obliged to go back and forth in the presence of a person to whom you owe respect, decorum requires that you pass behind him. If this cannot be done, make a courteous bow each time you pass in front of him.

When you are near the fire, decorum does not permit you to put your hands over the live coals, to pass your hands through the

flames, or to lay your hand on the stove, and it would be even more unbecoming to put your feet there. It is likewise a gross offense against civility to turn your back to the fire; if someone takes such a liberty, be careful not to imitate him.

When seated in front of the fireplace, do not get out of your seat and stand up, unless the most distinguished person in the group rises. In that case, you must get up when he does. It would be very rude to stoop down, to sit on the floor, or to try to approach nearer to the fire than the others who are present.

It shows a childish spirit to amuse yourself by playing with the tongs or poking at the fire. You must not even add wood to the fire; leave this task to the head of the household or to the servant in charge of the fire.

When you make a fire, it is important to do so in such a way that all those around the hearth can warm themselves easily. Later to want to disturb the fire without an evident need is a sign of a restless mind, which cannot leave things as they are. Still, when you are in front of a fire with a person to whom you owe much respect and he makes a move to tend the fire, it would be proper to take the tongs at once yourself, unless the other person insists on doing it to amuse himself.

It is entirely contrary to decorum for you to get so close to the fire that you might scorch your legs or to remove your shoes and to warm your feet in the presence of others. It is far worse for women and girls to raise their skirts when standing near the fire, as it also is in all other circumstances.

Charity and refinement require that you inconvenience yourself in order to give place to others when you are warming yourself at a fire. You ought to draw back to give those who need it the most a chance to warm themselves.

If you throw letters, papers, or anything of the kind into the fire, it is very uncouth for you to snatch them out again for whatever reason.

If you use fire screens in your own home, do not allow a servant to offer one to anyone sitting with you near the fire; refinement requires that you offer it yourself. If only one fire screen is available in a house where you are a guest and the host insists that you use it, you ought to do so, after having shown your reluctance, but it is proper not to make use of the screen at all. Put it

aside soon, placing it down quietly, so that no one notices you. It is likewise appropriate that as a guest, you accept courteously whichever fire screen is presented. Even if someone of rank has been passed over, it would not be good to say that you wish to give him the screen you received.

9

How To Act While Walking in the Streets and While Traveling in a Carriage or on Horseback

When walking in the streets, you must pay attention to walk neither too quickly nor too slowly. Going too slowly is a sign either of lethargy or of negligence. It is, however, more unbecoming for you to walk too fast, for this shows a much greater lack of self-control.

It is not proper for you to stop when in the streets, not even to speak to someone, unless there is a need to do so, and even then you must not linger.

When you go on a journey with a person whom you must respect, it is a matter of decorum for you to agree with everything, to find everything just right, not to fret about anything, never to make the other person wait, and to be always ready to render any service to him. Some people, when traveling, are never satisfied with the rooms or the beds, and because they never find anything good or done properly, they are always a source of annoyance to everyone.

If it happens during a journey that you are obliged to sleep in the same room with a person to whom you owe respect, civility requires that you let him undress and get into bed first. Then you ought to undress in an out-of-the-way corner near the bed you are to occupy, go to bed quietly, and make no noise during the night.

Propriety also requires that just as you ought to be the last to go to bed, you must also be the first to rise. It is not proper that the person who deserves your respect would see you undressed or find your clothes scattered about.

On arriving at the place where you are to lodge, it is very uncouth for you to rush to the rooms and to inspect the beds in order to choose the best. In a run-down lodging house, it would also be rude for a person who might be much superior to the others to take for himself everything that is worthwhile and comfortable, without worrying whether the others have any conveniences at all.

When taking a seat in a carriage, you must always take the last place if you are inferior in dignity to the other people with whom you are traveling. In a carriage there are usually two seats at the back and two in front, facing them. The first place of preference is in the back on the right, and the second is on the left. If there are three seats, the middle one is the third preference. If there are two doors, the more honorable position is at the right door, and the less honorable is at the left. The important places are toward the back.

If you travel in a carriage with a person superior to you in rank or whom you must honor, the respect you owe him ought to induce you to let him get in first, whereas you enter last. However, if this person orders you to get into the carriage ahead of him—something you must not do unless he insistently urges that you do so—you ought to give in, after making some sign of courtesy to show that you are not doing what you prefer. Then sit in the last seat, and do not take a better one unless obliged to do so.

You may—and you must—take a seat in the back of the carriage if the person of rank with whom you are traveling orders you to do so; sit next to him, if he wishes. It would not be proper for you to do this without an expressed order, nor is it in keeping with decorum to sit on a front seat facing him. You ought to sit on his left, turned slightly in his direction, and you must not put on your hat until he insists that you do so.

When you are riding in a carriage, it is very uncivil to look fixedly at any of the other passengers, to lean back against the seat back, or to rest your elbows anywhere at all. Hold your body erect and restrained, with your feet as close together as possible. You must not cross your legs or keep them too near those of someone else, unless the carriage is quite crowded and this cannot be avoided.

It is also very unbecoming and altogether contrary to decorum for you to spit in the carriage; if you have to do so, use your handkerchief. If you do spit out of the doorway, something not very courteous, especially if you are not seated, shield your cheek with your hand.

When you leave the carriage, civility dictates that you get down first, without having to be invited, so that you can give your hand to any distinguished person, whether man or woman, to help that

person step down. You also ought to leave by the nearer door, if there is no inconvenience in doing so. If there is no one to open the door, take the initiative, and open it. When a person of high rank is getting out of his carriage and tells you to stay there and wait for him, it is in keeping with decorum to get out at the same time he does, both out of respect and also to help him, and then you can get back inside. When he returns, you ought to get out again and reenter only after he is back inside.

If you meet the Blessed Sacrament while you are in a carriage, you must get out and kneel down. If you meet a procession, a funeral, the king, the queen, princes of royal blood, or people of eminent character and dignity, it is a duty and a matter of respect to halt the carriage until all have passed by. A man ought to take off his hat, and a woman ought to remove her mask.

It is not in keeping with decorum to get into a carriage or to mount a horse in the presence of someone for whom you ought to have some esteem. If you cannot persuade the person to go back into the house before you depart, it is proper to have the carriage go forward a bit or to lead the horse off until you can no longer see the person; then you may mount the horse or get into the carriage.

When you set out on horseback in the company of someone whom you ought to honor, it is proper to let him mount first, helping him to do so and holding his stirrup. As you would when on foot, yield him the first place, and keep behind him a bit, although keeping pace. If you happen to be on the sheltered side, however, and the wind is blowing dust on the other person, you must change places.

If you come to a river, a ford, or a muddy place when traveling by horse with someone to whom respect is due, reason and good order require that you go first. If you were to the rear and had to come from behind, cross at a sufficient distance from him so that your horse does not splash him with water or mud. If he starts to gallop, take care not to ride faster than he does or to try to show off the good qualities of your horse, unless he expressly asks you to do so.

10

Letters

Just as a Christian must strive to avoid making useless visits, decorum requires that Christians avoid writing letters that do not appear to be necessary.

There are three kinds of correspondence according to the rank of the person to whom you are writing. You can write to your superiors, to your equals, or to your inferiors. There are also three kinds of letters according to the contents: business letters, friendly letters, and complimentary letters. Each of these has its own particular style and manner of expression.

Letters addressed to your superiors must be very respectful. Those addressed to your equals ought to be courteous and always contain some expressions of esteem and respect. In letters written to your inferiors, you must give them tokens of affection and goodwill.

When you write a business letter, get to the point at once. Use the terminology proper to the topic, and explain clearly and without confusion what you want. If you have more than one topic to discuss, the correct form is to write a paragraph about each one, to make clear what you have to say, and to keep your style simple. Friendly letters ought to keep the same style and manner that you use in speaking, provided that it is correct, and you must make yourself understood as though you were speaking.

Complimentary letters must be polite and gracious and ought not to be longer than the compliments you are expected to make.

It is more respectful, when you write to a person superior to you, to make use of a large sheet of paper. No matter to whom you are writing, use a sheet large enough to be folded across the middle. You can use smaller sheets of paper to write notes, but even these must be folded in the middle.

Letters ought to begin with a salutation, such as “Monsieur” or “Monseigneur,” or for a woman or a girl, “Madame” or “Mademoiselle.” If you are writing to your own father, begin with the words, “Monsieur, my very honored father.” The words “Monsieur” and “Madame” ought to be written out in their entirety, with no

abbreviations; to do otherwise would be to offend against proper respect.

The word “Monsieur” is written alone at the top of the page, on the left, and between this word and the beginning of the letter, you must leave a blank space of several lines, more or less, depending on the rank of the person to whom you are writing. It is better to leave more space than less. You must be especially careful that the salutation, “Monsieur,” for example, is not part of a sentence or linked in some way to the first word of your letter. This would be the case if immediately after the word “Monsieur,” you began the letter and wrote, “Your servant came to inform me. . . .” This is also something you must pay attention to in speaking.

It is appropriate for Christians to begin their letters with the words with which Saint Paul usually starts his Epistles: “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” or “. . . with us.” People of a higher rank ought to say, “. . . with you”; people of equal rank, “. . . with us.” Decorum requires that when people of lower rank write to their superiors, they begin by asking their blessing and giving them an expression of their entire and sincere submission.

When writing to people of eminent dignity, it is not appropriate to address them as “you.” Ordinarily, you must use the title or the rank that distinguishes them. So, instead of writing “you,” address a prince as “Your Highness”; a bishop, a duke, a peer, or a minister of state as “Your Grace”; a religious superior as “Your Reverence.” When writing to a person to whom you owe respect, it is proper to repeat “Monsieur” or “Madame” from time to time in the body of your letter, but you must avoid doing so twice in the same sentence. Do not use an expression such as “My dear Monsieur,” or use that title with the name of a person of inferior rank. Ordinarily the expression “Monsieur” is written as part of the name of an office or an honor, and the pronoun “you” is followed by “Monsieur,” as in this example: “It is to you, Monsieur, that I owe this favor.”

In the body of the letter, you must use the person’s title of honor as often as you can do so naturally and without overdoing it, and you also ought to use other formal expressions.

When using the title of honor, you must make use of the proper form of address, saying, for instance, “Your Highness, my lord, will be kind enough to allow me to say . . .” or “Your Grace

knows quite well what happened. . . .” The title must be written out entirely, at least the first time you use it on any page, and when abbreviating it, use “Y. M.” for “Your Majesty” and “Y. H.” for “Your Highness.”

The terms “Monsieur” and “Monseigneur” are also used at the end of a letter, depending on the rank of the person to whom you are writing. The word “Monsieur” ought to be written in the middle of the blank space remaining between the end of the letter and the concluding words, “Your very humble and very obedient servant.” The expression “Monseigneur” is written as far down on the page as possible, and if in the body of the letter you used a title of honor, then at the bottom of the letter, after “Monseigneur,” you immediately write, “Your Highness’s (or Your Grace’s or Your Excellency’s) very humble servant. . . .,” and so forth.

To observe the rules of decorum, you must take care in writing to use the terms of propriety and civility that you would use in speaking. You are not allowed to use expressions that suggest duties or friendship when writing to people who are of a higher rank than you or for whom you ought to show esteem and respect. You may do this only with regard to people who are at least a little inferior to you. You must not state, for instance, “You showed me this kindness,” but rather, “You, Monsieur, were good enough to do me this favor.”

The style of the letter must correspond with the subject treated. If you are discussing some serious matter, the style must also be serious. Carefully avoid using any familiar expressions or jocular terms. You must also strive to adopt a clear and concise style, because when writing letters, you must make an effort to put things in a few words; this manner of writing is the most agreeable. If the letter you are writing is in reply to another one, you must, first, indicate the date of the letter previously received, reply item by item to all the points raised, and, finally, add anything new.

If there remains a good deal to write and there does not seem to be enough space left to put the word “Monsieur” where it ought to go, it would be proper for you to space out the writing, so that there are at least two lines of text left over to write on the next page. There must never be fewer than two lines on a single page.

After the words “I am . . .” or other suitable words at the end of the letter, write as a sign of submission to the person to whom

you have written, “Your very humble and very obedient servant.” Write the ending on two lines at the bottom and on the right side of the paper. Always finish a letter with these words, for you have no other way to indicate your respect. A son writing to his father ought to put, “Your very humble and very obedient son.” A subject writing to his king ought to use the terms, “My Lord, Your Majesty’s very humble, very obedient, and very faithful subject.”

When writing to an equal or to a person of inferior rank, you must always make use of terms that show respect, as though the one to whom you are writing were your superior in rank. You must never use a term indicating friendship or familiarity. If you write to a person far beneath you in rank, such as an artisan or a peasant, you would not ordinarily call him “Monsieur,” and you would end the letter with “I am cordially yours.”

In concluding a letter, always use the terms “Your very humble. . . .” and so forth in a sort of indicative or declarative, rather than imperative, mode. For example, you can say, “I am your most humble servant,” not, “Please give me orders,” or, “Receive from your humble servant.”

Decorum requires that you always put the full date and year on your letter, not merely the day of the week. To show great respect, place this at the very bottom of the page where the letter ends, on the left side and below the word “Monsieur.” In business letters, it is preferable to put the date at the beginning, at the top on the right side, because the one who receives the letter ought to know the date before reading it. You can also do the same thing when writing to a close friend or to an inferior.

When you write to a superior, it is entirely contrary to respect to append messages to other people at the end of the letter. It is just as bad to ask the one receiving your letter to give greetings or messages to people much above you or to include similar requests. This sort of thing is allowed only between friends, people of equal rank, and family members. These little postscripts at the end of a letter are usually couched in phrases like these: “Permit me, I beg of you, Monsieur, to assure Monsieur N. or Madame N. of my very humble respects and devotedness”; “I humbly beg you to assure. . . .”; “Please allow me, sir, to send my very humble greetings to Monsieur N. or Madame N.”

If your letter covers both sides of the paper, it is not polite to put it into the envelope like that. Instead, it is proper to cover

the last page with a blank sheet and then to leave a slight margin when you fold the sheets.

When writing to a person to whom you owe great respect, it is proper to place the letter in an envelope made of very clean white paper and to write the address on the envelope, not on the letter itself.

The salutation of the letter is like this: “To Monsieur” or “Monsieur.” Place this at the top of the first page of the letter, on the left end of the first line, and repeat “Monsieur” or “To Monsieur,” fully written out, on the same line at the extreme right. In the lower part of the front of the envelope or on the back of the letter, repeat “To Monsieur,” followed by the name of the person to whom you are writing, the titles, and the residence; for example, “Monsieur N., King’s Counselor. . . , X Street.” At the bottom right corner of the envelope, write the name of the city where this person lives: “In Paris,” for instance, if that is where he resides. It is very rude for you to indicate the price of the postage, for instance, “three sous.”* If you write to a person of much higher rank, you must usually put at the top of the face of the envelope, in the middle of the line, “For . . . ,” and toward the middle of the paper, the rest of the address immediately following. At the bottom, in the corner, write the name of the city where the person lives.

You can write a short note to a person who is an equal, a family member, or an inferior. You can also do so with people of superior rank, if you write to them often. Address notes in the same way as letters.

When a friend or a person who has a right to your respect asks you to abbreviate the formalities used in writing letters and simply to send notes and write the message directly without putting “Monsieur” at the top and without leaving much blank space, you ought to do so, in order not to annoy the person and not to show a lack of respect for the request.

When writing a note, put “Monsieur” in the body of the note, after the first words, like this: “You know, Monsieur, that. . . .” Write it out entirely and repeat it as in a letter, and at the end

*The postage was paid by the recipient upon delivery of the letter.

write, "I am, Monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant."

You must never read the letter, note, or papers of someone else or read anything while in the company of others, unless the matter is so urgent that it cannot be delayed. You are not even allowed to do this in the presence of one other person, unless you are much above him in rank.

If you are obliged to read a letter while in company, excuse yourself, and ask those present to allow you to reply to the person who brought the letter. Then get up, if you are seated, and go aside to read the letter in private.

Once you have begun to read a letter or anything else aloud, intending to communicate it to others, it is very rude to begin to read it to yourself or to whisper some passage that you wish to keep hidden from the others.

If you have gone aside to read a letter privately, when you return, it is proper to tell the group what might have been mentioned in the letter, especially if it is some piece of news, so that you do not appear too mysterious in what you are doing. If a person of superior rank hands you a letter that you can readily judge concerns you personally, you must not read the letter in his presence or even open it. If this letter concerns the person who presents it, it is proper to open it in his presence, first making him some gesture of politeness.

When you notice that someone wants to read a letter in private, do not approach him unless you are invited to do so.

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Brother Richard Arnandez, FSC, was born in New Iberia, Louisiana. From 1933 to 1936, he taught in the boarding school of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Passy-Froyennes, Belgium. In 1937 he received his bachelor's degree from Manhattan College in New York and later a *Licence des Lettres* from the University of Lille in France. After serving for many years as both teacher and administrator, Brother Richard, in 1949, was appointed Visitor of the New Orleans-Santa Fe District. From 1969 to 1972 he served as Secretary General and Vice-Procurator General of the Brothers' Generalate in Rome. He is author of several books and journal articles and is a professional translator.

Brother Gregory Wright, FSC, was a member of the faculty of the College of Santa Fe for 30 years and is currently professor at De La Salle University, Manila. He holds both a master's degree and a doctorate in history from the University of New Mexico. His doctoral dissertation is a study of John Baptist de La Salle's writings and of selected aspects of the spiritual doctrine they contain. Brother Gregory is a member of the Editorial Board of Lasallian Publications.