

“From the Pastor’s Desk”

June 20, 2010

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last week, a member of the Newman Center sent me this little article about how we should dress for church. I don't know who wrote it, but I think it is good for us to take to heart, especially as we move into summer and may tend to be more casual in the way we dress for Sunday Mass. Here is the article:

A quick glance around your church or synagogue and you'll notice that the majority of kids are sporting t-shirts, shorts and Crocs more fitting of a day at the park than an hour in God's house. It's not at all unusual to see kids looking like they just rolled out of bed with uncombed, tangled hair. Equally common are the teens in revealing tank tops and ill-fitting hip huggers that expose thong straps every time they kneel.

"Sunday best" has lost its meaning and fewer and fewer parents spend Saturday night scrubbing down kids in the bath and laying out clothes for the morning. The modern family is just too busy and "casual" for this kind of ritual.

But have parents become too casual? Perhaps the better question is why should parents go through the trouble of dressing kids up for church?

As a parent who does dress her kids up for church, all six of them, I can only give my reasons for going through the Sunday struggle -- and trust me it isn't easy. The first is simple -- that's how I was raised. I've always dressed up for church, so initially I did it out of habit. But as my family grew and it became harder and more time consuming to do, I've had to really consider my reasons for doing it.

Dressing my kids for church is a nonverbal way of letting even our youngest child know that our church is an important place and that Mass is an important event. The dress shoes and pretty dresses, the bows and neatly parted hair sets Sunday Mass apart from soccer practice and all the other things they do in the week. Yes, it is an inconvenience with a family our size, and it doesn't always work out despite our best efforts. It's a constant struggle getting everyone out the door and loaded into the minivan on time. Proof? Once we arrived with a shoeless 5-year-old.

The bottom line is that I go through the trouble out of respect for God and the other worshippers. Sometimes I'll hear people say, "God doesn't care what I wear." Or, "God only cares that I come." True enough. But faith and religion, in my view, is also about my response to God. God is not "lucky" that I showed up. I'm privileged to be invited. And the time and effort I put into bringing my family to His home freshly scrubbed, combed, and neatly dressed is part of my gift to Him. My God died on the cross for me. Dressing up to worship Him is the least I can do.

As the Catechism says, when we come to Mass and prepare ourselves to receive Holy Communion our "bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest." (CCC, 1387)

**In Christ Jesus,
Fr. Blaise Berg**