

WHAT THEY ASK ABOUT

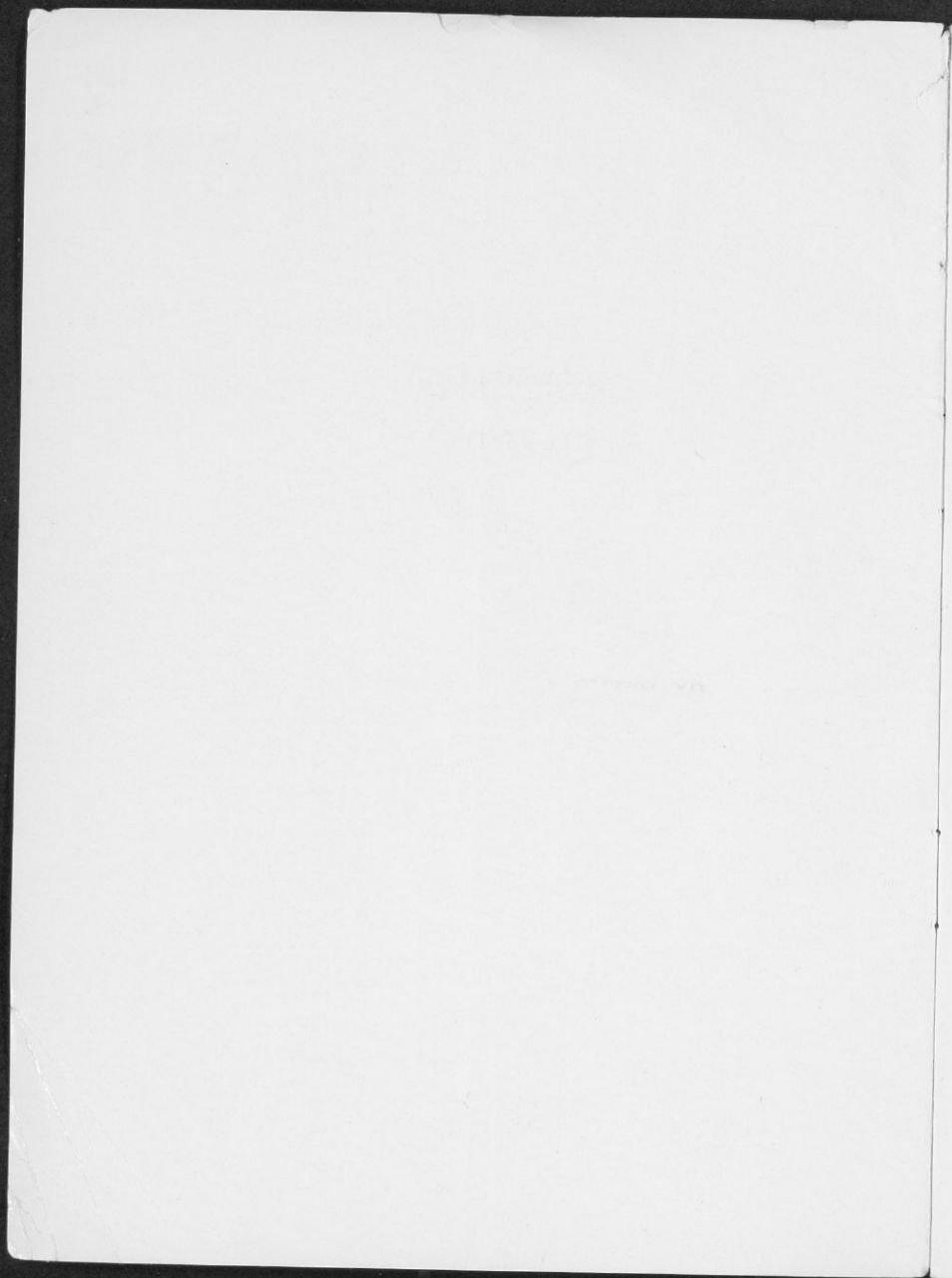
Conway J.D.
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KEEPING COMPANY

By Monsignor J. D. Conway



The age to begin — Sin to keep company with a non-Catholic? — Parental objections — Getting him interested — Playing a dangerous game — Is it wise to change? — The big break — With a divorced man — Is it a sin? — The ex-semi-narian — Must a kiss be confessed? — French-kissing — Young couple in love — Sufficient reason.



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*Apostolic Administrator of the
Diocese of Ft. Wayne, Indiana*
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KEEPING COMPANY . . .

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Q. *What is the proper age for a girl to keep company with a young man?*

A. I would prefer to let your mother answer that question. No general rule can apply to everyone. But moral issues aside, the girl who starts keeping steady company too early is missing the best fun of her youth. You might call it the fun of "playing the field," of enjoying the gang, and the thrill of that special date for a party or dance.

I'm antiquated, of course, just like your parents, but I

advise no steady company-keeping until after high school. Occasional dates, yes, gallant escorts for the big events or the movies. But no love affair. Your life will be much happier and less complicated. Your development will be more normal, and your ultimate choice of a steady boy friend will be more judicious. Incidentally, your school grades will be better, you will get more sleep at night, your disposition will be more agreeable, and you will have much less trouble at home.

Q. In a sermon, our priest said that it is a sin for anyone to keep company with a non-Catholic. Isn't he too strong in this statement?

A. He probably meant to say that it is an *occasion of sin*. It is not a sin in itself, but it may well lead to sin — even to a lifetime of sin.

You and I know dozens of good Catholics who are keeping company with non-Catholics. Their parents are nervous about it and their pastor is worried. What will be the result? But no one believes that they are committing serious sin. They go regularly to confession and Communion. How could they do that if they were committing sin, and intending to go right on committing it? Their confessor could not grant them absolution. The pastor might even have to deny them Communion publicly — after all, they would be public sinners.

How are we going to judge the morality of a situation of this kind? Is it not bad in itself. You are simply keeping pleasant, friendly, loving company with a nice decent person. It is not even an occasion of present sin. All its dangers are in the future. But we know that those dangers are very real, and they must be foreseen and evaluated now — in the beginning. Because when the dangers become present, you will not be in condition to deal with them reasonably. You will be in love. That means you will be largely incompetent. Your judgment will be confused and prejudiced; and you will have the rigidity of a sponge.

The dangers are important. The faith, morality, peace and happiness of yourself and your future children are all at

stake. What are the chances of attempted marriage outside the Church? Of a mixed marriage? Of quarrels about religion? Of birth-control problems? Of divorce? These dangers and many others are always present when people of different religions keep company.

We must try to evaluate all these dangerous factors, on one hand, and then compare them with the reasons which urge us to go on keeping company with this person. We like her; she is beautiful; she has a splendid character, a loving disposition, earns a good salary, is kind to dumb creatures, etc. She is by far the best prospect we ever had, maybe the only one, maybe the last one we can hope for. She is really interested in the Church, and will probably be a convert (don't count too much on this prospect). My parents like her. Her father is my boss. She can cook.

Now if you are honest and make a sensible, fair comparison of dangers and advantages, seeking help and advice when in doubt, and if you find that the certain advantages outweigh all probable dangers, then you are *morally right* in your company-keeping. If the dangers are really great and probable, and your only reason for running around with the girl are her abilities to dance, drink and neck, then you are *morally wrong* in company-keeping. You are asking for trouble; and you will probably whine plenty, and blame the Church when you get it.

Q. Isn't it wrong for parents to object to their daughter's keeping company with a non-Catholic when he has the intention of becoming a Catholic? My parents insist that I keep company with a Catholic boy whom I know too well to care for.

A. Parents are definitely right in objecting to dangerous friendships for their children. The Church forbids marriage to non-Catholics. Company-keeping prepares the way for these forbidden marriages.

If your young man is sincere, let him give proof of his good intentions by taking instructions NOW. Otherwise you should follow your parents' advice. Easily expressed inten-

tions for the future are not enough. Hell awaits their failure — and sometimes prompts their deception.

Of course no wise parents will insist that their daughter keep company with some particular person. It is probably the surest way of making her dislike him.

Q. I am keeping company with a non-Catholic boy. How shall I go about getting him interested in the Church?

A. Before answering your question I would remind you that you are playing a dangerous game. Have you carefully weighed all the problems? Have you talked the matter over with your parents and your pastor?

The best thing would be for you to discontinue this friendship before you fall in love and lose your good sense in the flame of your own heart. But that is not answering your question. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Show him by your actions and conversation what religion means in your life.

2. Talk about your Church, the religion of your parents, family prayers, your pastor, the Sisters who taught you in school, something you heard in the sermon last Sunday, someone you saw at Mass, that Catholic book you read, the activities of your sodality, or the St. Ambrose football team. Let one thing lead naturally to another. If you get no interested response, be careful! He is probably fighting shy of your important subject.

3. Invite him to go to church with you — to that novena you attend regularly, to Mass, or a mission. Show him your rosary, your medals, your missal.

4. Invite him to a church party or picnic.

5. Have him meet your good Catholic friends. Join them for your fun and companionship.

6. Take him to your home. Let him see what a good Catholic family is like. Point out the family crucifix and Bible. Let him join in prayers before and after meals.

7. Try to have him meet your favorite priest or Sister.
8. Suggest that he read a book.
9. If he gets serious about love, engagements, and stuff, you should get serious too about the dangers and problems of mixed marriage, the law of your Church which forbids such marriages, your unwillingness to marry a non-Catholic, etc.
10. Before you agree to an engagement, make him agree to some instructions or inquiry into the teachings of the Church.

What you do, do quickly. Face the problem frankly. Don't let your friendship become a habit and grow into love while you dillydally on the subject of religion.

Any woman who marries a man to reform him is a fool. A woman who marries a man to convert him is a fool's apprentice. And the man who cuts himself in on either deal is fairly fatuous himself.

Q. In a recent issue of "The Catholic Messenger" you say a Catholic girl going with a non-Catholic boy is "playing a dangerous game." A number of times before I have noticed you imply that it is practically a sin for a Catholic to go with a non-Catholic. I don't quite see why it is. I myself am a converted Catholic. I married a Catholic man. In the class I was confirmed with there were 47 adults. Except for four of these adults, all were becoming Catholics because they married Catholics. As I see it, instead of "playing a dangerous game" when these Catholics kept company with Protestants—or non-Catholics—they were actually bringing new members into the Church. Isn't that important?

A. A game may still be dangerous even when a fair percentage win at it. The stakes are high. When you win, you gain happiness on earth and glory in heaven. You help save another soul—the soul of the one you love most. But when you lose, you may lose faith and happiness and your own soul, and possibly the souls of many other people. In your confirmation class were the ones who won. There are plenty who lose.

Not much is heard of them except in saddened families, harassed rectories, and the divorce courts.

We all know many like you who have received God's grace and faith through the love and example of a good Catholic man — or woman. That's one reason the Church grants dispensations. Thank God that you won. Pray for those who lose.

Q. Is it wise to change your religion for someone so that you can marry them or shouldn't you change for this reason?

A. It is apparent from your questions that you are a non-Catholic, interested in the problems of marriage to a Catholic. The only sound motive for changing your religion is sincere belief and conviction. You should never change for any other motive. If you are actually contemplating marriage to a Catholic, you may be impelled by that motive to study the religion, take instructions and try to understand it fully. Maybe in the course of these instructions you will come to believe in the Church. That often happens. If your belief becomes honest and firm, you should then become a Catholic.

Q. My boy friend is a Lutheran. He recently consented to take a course of instructions, but after only two instructions he was convinced that he could never be a Catholic and refused to take any more. He has many false ideas about Catholics. But he has fine qualities and similar interests, and we have gone together a couple of years. I continue to pray for his conversion, but we are not seeing one another. I think a lot of him and know we could be happily married if it were not for conflicting religions. Shall I just leave things as they are, or shall I tell him about all the Masses, Communions, novenas and prayers that I am still saying for his conversion?

A. Leave things as they are. Looking him up to tell him might well be an excuse to start seeing him again. I am sure you might be happy together if it were not for the difference of religion. But the difference is there; it is real, and big.

You have shown courage; don't spoil it all by weakening and going back to him. I am sure that you will be rewarded with greater happiness in return for the sacrifice you have made.

You probably read in the papers about the conference of Missouri Synod Lutherans, held in Houston, Texas, which strongly condemned the marriage of Lutherans to Catholics. More power to them. We hope they succeed in keeping every living Lutheran from marrying Catholics. They don't want the unborn children of Lutherans condemned to "the soul-destroying religion of the anti-Christ" (meaning: the soul-saving religion of Christ). We don't want the unborn children of Catholics subjected to the hatreds and heresies of Lutheranism. So there.

We can heartily agree with one of their statements; I quote: "We ought to prepare our young people. If our members acknowledge the love of Jesus Christ most of all, then our answer is they must submit all other love to that."

You have submitted your human love to your greater love for Jesus Christ. He will love you greatly in return.

Q. I know a young Catholic woman who is keeping company with a divorced man. Isn't this a sin?

A. It certainly is unless the Church has investigated the young man's previous marriage and found him free to marry. Why is it a sin? First of all, it is a scandal and bad example. Second, it is flagrant flirting with the occasions of sin. It can only lead to adultery, a mock marriage, illegitimate children and loss of faith.

It is difficult for Catholics to keep their ideas straight, living as we do in the midst of a growing paganism. Civil divorce does nothing to a marriage. Keeping company with a divorced man is a nice way of philandering with a married man. Do you think it is a sin for a young Catholic woman to run around with another woman's husband? That's what a divorced man is—another woman's husband, until death.

Q. A Catholic woman has been granted a divorce and seems to think that this entitles her to go with other men and even grant them certain liberties. I firmly believe that her divorce entitles her only to live apart from her former husband. Your answer will be greatly appreciated.

A. A divorced woman has no more right to keep company with other men than has a woman living with her husband. Any "liberties" she allows are adulterous, at least in desire, intent, or tendency. Her company-keeping is a fertile source of scandal, and a danger to any decent unmarried men she may entrap.

Q. Is it not sinful to keep company with a divorced person, and must this not be confessed, and the practice stopped before one can receive the sacraments?

A. That is exactly what my moral book says — exactly what the Church teaches.

Lest anyone think that I am stating personal opinion, or am too strict, let me quote from the law of one of our neighboring dioceses:

"Pastors will do everything in their power to prevent Catholics from keeping company with divorced persons. Pastors will inform their flocks that persons who are guilty of such continued and intimate company-keeping are living in a proximate occasion of mortal sin, are giving grave scandal, and cannot be absolved in confession as long as they persist in such an attitude of mind and heart."

Q. If a young man goes to study with the intention of becoming a priest, and then he realizes that this is not his vocation, when he returns and keeps company with a Catholic girl, have her parents the right to object?

The same with a young girl that leaves to enter the convent to become a Sister, and then returns home, and after a while a certain young man starts to keep company with her; but his par-

ents object and don't want their son to keep company with this young lady or get married to her. Is it right, in the Catholic religion, to interfere, if both are good Catholics?

A. In both cases the parents are entirely wrong in their objections. A young girl would be very fortunate in getting the average ex-seminarian as a prospective husband. He is serious and has high ideals and strong religious principles. He has received a good education and careful spiritual training. He has learned to know himself and has striven to control himself; and he has had the courage to make a critical decision.

A young man is equally fortunate in finding for a friend and fiancée a young girl of high ideals and aspirations, religious fervor and sensitive morality. These are usually the characteristics of a girl who aspires to the religious life. The ardent love and spirit of sacrifice which moved her to serve God by sacred vows can become a boon of happiness to her husband and family. The spiritual training of the novitiate should be a better preparation for marriage than the character development received by her girl friends in the tavern and dance hall — or the parked convertible.

Some may object that the young man or woman who quits the seminary or convent shows signs of weakness, vacillation, and uncertainty of purpose. In rare cases that might be true. And there are some who leave by request rather than choice. They get the boot. But usually the ex-seminarian or ex-novice has had the courage to look at the stars, aspire to them, and set out toward them. Then having found themselves on a road too steep and rough for them, they have had the courage to turn back in time — facing criticism and ridicule from those who never had the vision or the courage to try the steep road at all — those who never even saw the stars.

The Church wants seminarians and novices to be entirely free. She doesn't want any pressure put on them from public opinion or parental preference. Their choice is solemn, sacred and eternal. She wants them to be able to return to lay life without penalty. She doesn't want them shunned or banned or badgered. The old-wives' superstitions about the "spoilt

priest" and the negated nun are foreign, fanatical and mediaeval. Let God's children be free.

Q. Our pastor told us that "necking" is a grievous sin, and that even a small good-night kiss between teen-agers of the opposite sex is a matter of confession. Would you please explain IF and WHY we are obliged to confess this, providing no sin is committed and neither is passionately aroused.

A. The letter which accompanies this question shows that it is from a group of high school students who are very sincere in wanting to know what is right in this matter.

The first thing we will have to do is consult our juvenile dictionary. What do you mean by "necking"? I presume that it is not the same as "petting." A non-Catholic book which I have defines petting as: "physical contact for pleasure which is an end in itself, arising from sexual desire, with sexual stimulation and response . . . stirring up sexual-colored emotions . . . producing tension, etc." There is no question about a thing like that; you know as well as I do that it is a mortal sin.

My informants tell me that necking is a much less intense and purposeful activity. It involves a certain amount of close and pleasant contact; it could be a proper display of affection, a legitimate invitation to love; its thrill might be restricted to that excitement and exhilaration which makes the pulse rapid and quickens respiration, but is not precisely sexual. We might call it sensual; it is not necessarily sinful. But it naturally leads to the sexual, sometimes quickly. So it is a dangerous activity; maybe that is part of the thrill of it. It is strongly counter-indicated for teen-agers.

To judge the morality of necking, we would have to know (1) what is done; (2) why it is done — what the intentions are; (3) what the emotional and volitional results are for the individual; (4) what the dangers are; and (5) how good the reasons are.

The detailed discussion of all those factors would exceed the range of this column, but I think we can sum it up for

most of you high school teen-agers. Necking is out, at least when it is purposeful, planned, and prolonged. In this case your pastor is right about it; even if it is not directly sexual, it creates dangers which are too great for the reasons justifying them. If it is casual, infrequent, playful or passingly affectionate, there is probably no harm done.

The freedoms of modern youth are more than four. One of them is freedom of physical contact. Custom sanctions a measure of it; morality cannot always approve what custom sanctions. Freedom of this kind can easily become license. The young people of today have problems resulting from this freedom, problems of judgment and self-control. They must draw a line, and hold that line; and it is not necessarily the arbitrary line moralists might envisage. In other words it is hard for parents or pastor to lay down firm general rules for every action or circumstance. But they do know the principles, and you do well to listen to them in forming your own judgments, because you can easily fool yourself, and convince yourself that the thing you want very much to do is right.

Regarding kissing — we have to face it — the old trick has new meanings, less profound and significant. Oldsters tell us — and we listen a bit skeptically — that it used to come late in courtship, was expressive of deep affection based on love, and was a firm invitation and pledge that love should grow. It was seldom given — they say — except to the man you intended to marry (men were not so restricted, it seems). It was a beautiful symbol, with sacred significance. If there was fire in it, the flames were sanctifying, because its ardor reflected love divine.

The modern kiss is a nice conventional way of saying: "Good night, big boy, it's been nice knowing you." It still has significance; it means: "We had a pleasant evening, and you are not entirely repulsive." It is still a line crossed; but the line is imaginary, and the rule is that each one should use his own imagination as to where it is drawn and what is beyond. It may be a frank invitation; it may mean simply: Good night.

I have asked some of my best young people, religious and conscientious, and they tell me they see nothing wrong in a

simple good-night kiss. Some of them, approaching 20, think that it is out of place for "teen-agers"—that means under 17, by their estimates.

I am not suggesting that we abdicate our position as moralists to even the most honest teen-agers. But if we are to help them with their problems, we must consult them. We know the principles; they know the facts. Practical morality is the application of principles to the facts. If we misjudge the facts, our moral decision may be just as wrong as if we ignore the principles.

Regarding that "small good-night kiss between teen-agers," I would say this: as long as it remains a small one, modest and friendly, is not too frequently repeated, does not arouse the passions of either party, or occasion serious danger of doing so, it is not a sin, or at least, not so serious that you are required to mention it in confession.

However, kissing does become sinful when passion takes over, and a kiss is one of nature's ways of arousing the passions. It can readily expose you to dangers. You have to have good reasons to encounter those dangers; and high school dates hardly provide those reasons. That is why my serious college students think the kiss is not called for in teen-age dating.

Beware of the kissing habit. Small good-night kisses don't get smaller; and they may soon mean more than good-night.

Girls should be the arbiters in the kissing game. Each one has the right to decide who may kiss her and who may not. She should never kiss a boy she doesn't really want to kiss. And she would do well to ask herself why she wants to kiss him. No girl should think herself a prude if she refuses a good-night kiss. And most boys will not think her so, if she is simply frank and firm and good-natured about it. The teen-age boy has to display his manliness; he must try to get that good-night kiss; sometimes he is a bit relieved if he fails, but is flattered.

Girls sometimes fear that they will be unpopular and not get dates if they refuse to kiss. Are they so unattractive that their kiss must be a come-on? What about their face and

figure, their brain and wit and solid goodness, their clothes and hair and Daddy's car? Sex may be the underlying basis of her attraction to boys, but she need not throw it out boldly as bait.

Q. Is French-kissing a sin? When does it become a sin? Is it seriously wrong? I have always been under the impression that it was a mortal sin.

A. Just remain under that impression. It is a mortal sin — unless it is done by husband and wife. It is a sin from the beginning. It has only one purpose: to arouse sexual feelings. It is not a display of affection, not an appropriate means of showing and attracting love. Its purpose is venereal. When any act is done, outside of marriage, for the purpose of obtaining sexual pleasure, that act is a mortal sin from the beginning, however slight it might be in itself. It is a sin against the virtue of chastity; and all deliberate sins against chastity are mortal sins.

In giving this answer I am presuming that by "French-kissing" you mean kissing in the manner of the doves — which our moral books refer to as the columbine kiss. My dictionary gives 179 combinations using "French" as an adjective. It includes "French leave," "French seam," and "French fried potatoes," but it does not mention a French kiss. I doubt that the French would claim it. Their typical kiss is the accolade; and there is nothing very sensual about that.

Q. I would like to know what a young couple in love should do if they cannot kiss and embrace without feeling some sexual feeling and gratification. They are planning on being married, but marriage is impossible right away. Is it a sin if they have sexual feelings while kissing and embracing?

A. These young people who are honestly in love and plan to be married may very properly express their love with a kiss and an embrace. If they are normal young people, this expression of love is going to arouse sensual pleasure and definite

sexual movements. These they must not seek, or voluntarily accept, enjoy, or encourage. They should ignore them, as much as possible.

The principal distinction between this type of kiss and the "French kiss" discussed above, lies in the motive. You are not looking for a sexual thrill; you are not trying to anticipate 50% of the privileges and joys of marriage; you are not trying to see how far you can go without going too far. You honestly love this guy, and you want him to know it; and you want to encourage his love for you, and keep him anxious to marry you. That is all very good. Presumably his intentions are similar. He is not trying to make you half his wife already. He is not trying to entice you into petting parties to get a thrill. His hands behave themselves, or are easily put in their place. His kisses are warm, and fervent, and thrilling; but not desperately seeking and demanding.

In these circumstances you are dealing with the virtue of modesty — that virtue which protects chastity. Modesty is a flexible virtue. For good reason it can be pushed a long way without sin. Against it there may be slight sins. Only when immodesty seriously and unreasonably endangers chastity is it a grave sin.

Chastity is uncompromising. No sin against it is venial. If you intend sexual pleasure, you are guilty of mortal sin from the beginning. If you consent to sexual pleasure, accept and enjoy it, you are guilty of mortal sin. But no temptation is a sin, though dallying with temptation may be.

So let modesty protect you. Be sure that your intentions are right. Express your love with fervor and sincerity; accept his love with confidence. But don't let your expressions of love get out of hand; don't let your feelings carry you into consent to sexual pleasure. Don't let your kisses last too long. Let him make you his pet, but don't let his petting become a party.

Q. In a recent answer you stated that a divorcee must, "like any other married woman, avoid intimate company of other

men." Do you mean to imply that such intimate company is O.K. for the unmarried?

A. That is exactly what I mean. Of course I used the word *intimate* in its literal sense, not as a euphemism for illicit sexual intercourse. My dictionary says that such intimate company is "close, personal, private, and familiar." Such company with men is wrong for the married woman or the divorcee. It may be perfectly good and proper for the unmarried couple.

Intimate relations, in the *illicit* sexual sense, are a mortal sin for anyone, whether single, married or divorced. The only difference is that the divorcee commits two mortal sins: one against justice; the other against chastity. Two unmarried people sin only against chastity.

As far as the virtue of chastity is concerned, there is no essential difference between the divorcee and the virgin. Any direct deliberate seeking of sexual pleasure outside of marriage is a mortal sin, whether it be done by thought, desire, solitary sensation, or intimate contact.

But close, personal, private, and familiar company-keeping is not necessarily concerned with the virtue of chastity. It should be governed by the virtue of modesty. The divorcee who keeps company with a man is guilty of serious sin against the virtue of modesty, even if her relations with him remain perfectly chaste. Two youngsters in love commit no sin at all by the same chaste, but intimate company-keeping.

A divorced woman is a married woman. Her divorce gives her no privilege. She must conduct herself like any other married woman in her relations with men. She may not maintain friendships which would be properly distasteful to her husband if he were still living with her and loved her. She may not conduct herself in a manner which might be dangerous to herself or her masculine friend, or a source of scandal to others.

A young boy and girl may very properly develop and maintain close, personal, private, and familiar associations and

friendships; else how would they ever fall in love, attract love, or prepare for marriage?

The virtue of modesty must govern all those things which are even remotely related to chastity; all thoughts and images, reading and pictures, dress and conduct, flirtations and dances and games, embraces and kisses, love-making and engagements.

Chastity is a beautiful, tender, precious virtue which tries to restrain the most violent of human passions and keep them subject to right reason. It keeps us from any deliberate desire of, or consent to, illicit sexual pleasure. Except for husband and wife, all voluntary sexual pleasure is illicit. Any deliberate violation of chastity is a mortal sin.

Most things of tender, precious beauty have to be protected. Chastity is protected by a more rugged, practical, flexible virtue: MODESTY. It keeps dangers away, like a castle guard protecting the queen; or if it must let dangers enter, it keeps watch on them and restrains them that they do no harm.

Dangers try to enter by all doors and windows: especially by sight and hearing and touch. Sometimes they seem to be already inside and attack by imagination. It is the duty of modesty to kick out the thoughts and daydreams, and to keep external dangers from entering — except when there is good reason to admit them under guard.

Modesty is a prudent guard, not a frightened fanatic, or a stern and stubborn prude. She appreciates the precious, inviolable beauty of the virtue she guards. But she knows that chastity cannot be permanently isolated from all dangers. She knows that she must admit some dangers, even serious ones occasionally.

Modesty has her list of rules:

1. Unless there is sufficient good reason, it is a mortal sin to let in any serious danger, e.g., any thought, look, or touch which tends strongly to excite carnal pleasures, or immediate danger of consent to them.

2. Unless there is sufficient reason, it is a venial sin to admit even minor dangers.

3. It is no sin at all to admit these dangers *if there is sufficient reason* and they are closely guarded to prevent their doing harm. The harm they might do is to bring on immediate danger of consent to sexual pleasure: a violation of chastity.

Modesty always knows that the more serious the danger, the more serious the reason must be for admitting it, and the closer the guard.

But modesty would become the vice of prudishness if it did not accept sound reasons:

Necessary study is sufficient reason for reading a suggestive book.

Medical examination or care is sufficient reason for prudent but dangerous touches.

Instruction or the discussion of problems may be good reason for dangerous conversation.

Legitimate youthful pleasure, friendship, and development gives cause for dates and company-keeping.

Entertainment and the fostering of social graces and contacts gives reasonable excuse for dances and parties.

Kisses and embraces, in spite of their danger, are a natural and proper way to show sincere affection and attract honest love.

Engagements are an honorable preliminary to marriage.

It is in this realm of sound reason that we find the difference between the divorcee and the debutante. What *good* reason can the divorcee have for dates? She may get entertainment and relaxation from her loneliness and boredom. But what wife may properly seek men other than her husband for such purpose? She may get friendship, even love. But it will be at the price of either frustration or sin. It has no legitimate aim or purpose.

Young unmarried people have a variety of excellent reasons for developing similar friendships: the immediate joy and happiness of companionship, entertainment, youthful fun; development of personality, of confidence, of ease and grace and thoughtfulness of others; a step in the process of growing

up; the thrill of loving and of being loved; the manly pride and joy of conquest; the feminine thrill of successful charm and attraction; all the proper pleasures, pains, sensations, smiles, tears, and sentiments of infatuations; the tenderness, kindness, jealousies, fears, and fantastic ecstasies of young love; all those marvelously foolish thrills which prepare young hearts for marital bliss.

Two young people in love act the way God made them and intends them to act, in developing their love for each other, in manifesting it when it is real, in attracting it honestly. Such love brings dangers to chastity, as good young people know, and old people well remember. But there is abundant reason for such danger, as long as it is prudently watched.

Without such dangers what would become of marriage, and the grace of its sacrament? How would man and woman develop that love which imitates divine love? What would lead them to the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose in man's creation, to co-operation with Him in creating new life to live forever, new souls to His image? These dangers are preliminary to parental love and sacrifice, to filial love and confidence, to God's eternal glory, and man's eternal happiness, to love shared with the Divinity.

Who but the coward would shun dangers when so much is at stake? But only the fool becomes foolhardy. There must be prudence, care, good sense, and a loving respect for that precious virtue of chastity. In fact the full realization of present joy, future happiness and sacred purpose demands that modesty be vigilant to keep chastity safe.

Q. You recently had a list of rules about modesty. I just don't understand what would be a sufficient reason to admit dangers. I have never allowed a boy to do very much, because I thought it would be sinful. It seems if I correct the boys, they just won't ever go with me again. They tell me, "Oh, all the other girls do it." And what about the steady couples? One boy asked me that, and I told him I wasn't that kind of a girl and no one could change my mind. I don't suppose he'll ever go with me again. I liked this boy! I don't know what to do. One thing, I

won't change for any of them. In my town I think there are very few girls who are like me. You don't have much of a chance.

A. You have pretty well set forth the problem of youth in courtship. You are a bit wrong, however, in thinking that the problem is uniquely your own. It is shared, in some measure, by all the girls who insist that they are not "that kind of a girl." It is shared by all young men who really want to obey the laws of God, and who have respect for the girls with whom they keep company.

There is a problem, because there is a conflict. On the one hand, we know what is right. We know what God commands. We know what will contribute to our proper moral and psychological development and help us to be happy for life. In conflict with that are our passions and desires. We have inclination to seek immediate gratification and pleasure, even though we know it is not good for us. Those passions and desires are very strong, and they are common to both boys and girls. Our modern customs of courtship, and freedom between young boys and girls, contribute to the severity of this conflict. Young men and women, boys and girls, are at least as good today as they ever were. They want to do right. They have faith and sound principles. But they are put in much greater dangers than they used to be. They have to be stronger.

Some girls, and some boys, too, solve the problem by simply choosing one of the alternatives or the other. They let themselves go, with sinful consequences. Or they are simply so strict that they become prudes and repel even close friendship. As usual, the proper solution is somewhere between these two extremes.

As I said in my original article, to which you refer, modesty is not an absolute virtue. It is relative. Relative to the danger. Relative to the necessity of facing the danger. It is an outer defense of chastity, which is an absolute virtue.

Attitude and intention are the important things. If young people are determined to keep the element of sex, all sexual

pleasures, out of their company-keeping and dating, the battle is half won, at least. If their attitude or intention is one of compromise, one of trying to determine just how far they can go without being guilty of serious sin, one of trying to decide just where to draw the line, then the battle is half lost before it is begun. Morally speaking, there is really no place for petting, necking or other sensational sparring on any casual dates or ordinary company-keeping. There may well be place for some show of affection, a casual embrace, or playful encouragement.

When it comes to steady company-keeping, with serious intention of marriage, then there is more reason for the encouragement of real love, and for serious signs of affection. Here again, however, the intention must be right. There must be no seeking of sexual satisfaction. It must be a matter of showing, developing, and encouraging love and affection. It must be a preparation for marriage, not an anticipation of marriage. The young girl's ability to attract the attention, interest and persistent pursuit of young men is not a question of her being "that kind of a girl." It is a matter of her total personality. Good looks help. Friendliness, happiness, liveliness, and interest in others, ability to make others enjoy themselves and to be at ease, carefulness in dress and appearance, all these are factors which are helpful. Sexual attractiveness is a very forceful element, of course, and "that kind of a girl" can always find that kind of a man. She has something definite to offer. But the good girl is not in competition with her. She makes a mistake if she tries to compete. Of course she commits sin, too. The good girl's offerings are friendship; companionship; a good healthy, hearty time; fidelity; helpfulness; and the promise of enticing happiness for the future and the permanency of family and home.

Your letter indicates to me that your trouble is not your virtue, but the fact that you make a career of virtue. I don't mean that, exactly, either, but you seem to consider yourself an exception. I suspect that there are many other girls in your town quite as good as you. They just don't make it quite as hard for themselves, or so hard for their boy friends. They

are good naturally. They ward off a boy's wandering hands with a laugh and a joke, not with accusation of assault. They are pure, but not prudish; chaste, but not sad or fearful. They do not consider their chastity a handicap, but a beautiful virtue, in itself an attraction to a young man. For them modesty is not a handicap, but simply the ordinary sensible rules of the game. They accept it and enjoy it. They have their troubles, but they don't suffer constantly under them.

You are a good girl, and I admire you and wish to encourage you. I hope that nothing I have written in my column will shake the strict moral principles to which you adhere. But try to be happy in your holiness. Make your modesty a virtue, not a morbidity. Don't suspect the motives of every boy you meet. Of course, many of them are going to try you out to see how far they can go. But if you put them in their place handily and cleverly, they will respect you and love you for it. Of course if you slap them down with stern rebuke, they are not apt to come back for more.

Q. I have been told that going steady is a mortal sin. I would like to know if this is true, and how it could be if nothing sinful is done?

A. I would judge that you are a very young person; and I think it might be a sin for you to go steady at your age; however, I would want to talk to you personally and find out all the factors involved before I would say definitely that it is a sin, or how much of a sin it is.

For two young people of reasonable maturity who are falling in love and hoping to be married, going steady may be a good and virtuous and beautiful thing, pleasing to God and sanctifying to their souls. They have respect for each other and for God's laws; they conduct themselves properly, and yet manage to give expression to their love and to encourage love in return. They encounter dangers, but handle them prudently. Their good intentions and the happy home they hope to establish give them good sound reasons to encounter dangers. They go steady without any guilt at all.

The picture is quite different for two little brats—or angels—just entering their 'teens. It would be ridiculous for them to think seriously of marriage for six or eight years yet. Are they going to go steady all that time? And if they do, what will be the moral results? Intimacy increases with time and familiarity. Or will they break it up, and each start over anew with someone else? And if such are their plans and prospects, do they have sufficient reason to encounter present passing dangers?

This teen-age dating business is a real problem. Generally Catholic moralists, educators, and parents are opposed to "going steady" during high school years; but there are some exceptions whose prudence and experience can hardly be ignored. And many teen-agers are quite in favor of it—especially the girls. They will tell you of the security and confidence it gives them—social security. I have even heard them claim that it keeps them from being boy-crazy, giggly, and self-conscious.

So there are some reasons for it; but I am confident that the reasons against are much more important. Youngsters should grow up with the crowd, keep interests and activities befitting their age, extend their friendships and acquaintance, and above all avoid those moral dangers which are very likely to result when two immature youngsters are much together and trying to impress each other that they are quite grown up.

So, whoever you are, and whatever your age, don't let anyone tell you flatly and indiscriminately that you are guilty of mortal sin if you go steady. But I would advise you seriously to follow the counsel of your parents and your confessor—so that you will not run foolishly into dangers you do not surmise.

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