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THE
GENTLEMANLY
PRIEST

By

FRANCIS J. CONNELL, C. SS. R.

A GRAIL PUBLICATION



James Mosley

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INTRODUCTION

This brochure had its origin in a paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Catholic Educational Association held at Chicago. The members of the major seminary section, before whom it was read, honored me by requesting that it be extended to greater proportions, and enhanced with more detailed information on the subject of proper deportment. I feel therefore that this pamphlet is not merely a statement of my own convictions regarding the observance of the norms of good manners by priests, but also expresses the sentiments of a group of intelligent and cultured priests engaged in the sublime work of preparing young men for the priesthood. Necessarily, I had to limit myself to a summary presentation of the rules of etiquette; so that this little work is not intended to supplant the more complete works on the subject of the manners expected of the priest, such as CLERICAL COURTESY by the Rev. Albert Rung, or the secular treatises on general etiquette. But I think that I have touched on the principal points of the courtesy that the priest must manifest; and particularly, I have emphasized the reasons why the priest must exemplify in speech and in action the highest type of politeness. If this lesson is conveyed to the priests and to the seminarians who may read this booklet, I shall feel amply repaid for the time and effort required for its composition.

Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R.

CHAPTER I

MUST THE PRIEST BE A GENTLEMAN?

Should the Catholic priest be a gentleman, if by "gentleman" we mean a man who conforms habitually to those rules which people of culture regard as the standards of politeness? The spontaneous reply of anyone imbued with an appreciation of the exalted dignity of the priestly office is an unqualified affirmation. Yet, I could conceive of arguments to the contrary—arguments endowed with a certain measure of plausibility. It could be contended that in striving to copy the usages of society the priest will gradually develop the habit of making the superficial conventionalities of the world the chief norm of his conduct rather than the supernatural principles of Christ's teachings. Again, it might be objected that the priest who shows himself punctilious in observing the laws of etiquette runs the risk of alienating himself from the less cultured members of his flock, who will be awed by their pastor's elegant manners, so different from their own simple and unpolished ways. How can a priest who apes the studied mannerisms of the proud and wealthy hope to reach the hearts of the poor and lowly who constitute perhaps the major portion of his parish?

However, a little thought will show that these objections fail to prove their point. The politeness that we believe should be practiced by every priest is not that type of demeanor that is limited to the externals of good manners. To the ambassador of Christ etiquette should be the application in daily life of the Master's commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." True, the priest must know and practice the accepted canons of refinement; but for him they must be the external manifestation of a sincere respect and a genuine love for all his fellow-creatures, firmly rooted in his soul. Neither will the priest's conformity to the rules of good breeding set a barrier between himself and even the lowliest of his flock; for true courtesy demands that one so act that he does not cause embarrassment to his less cultured companions, even though at times this may entail the adoption of some of their mannerisms. As Father Arthur Barry O'Neil remarks: "If Father Patrick, taking dinner with one of his parishioners out in the country, conforms to the local custom of drinking his coffee from his saucer and eating his peas with his knife, his kindly motive deprives his action of all boorishness or bad form." However, Father O'Neil hastens to add: "But he certainly should not acquire the habit of doing so" (*Clerical Colloquies*, p. 37). The truth is, that even those Catholics who are themselves neglectful of the fine points of deportment expect good manners from their priest, and are by no means alienated from him because of his habitual courtesy. On the contrary, they entertain little respect for the cleric who mingles freely with them, imitating their rough and uncouth deport-

ment. It is one instance of the general principle that the people are raised by the priest who remains above them, not by the priest who makes himself a "good fellow" by descending to their level.

The unique place that the priest holds in the community in America furnishes him with a potent motive for observing the laws of etiquette on every occasion. I do not hesitate to assert that in the United States at the present day most educated and fair-minded persons, whatever be their religious persuasions, are convinced that Catholic priests as a body are superior to every other class of men in intellectual and moral qualities and in ability for leadership. Moreover, the majority of our citizens are quite willing to extend to every priest the respect and the deference that are consonant with this idea, provided he measures up to their expectations. Now, one of the standards—I might even say the chief standard—that people of the world use in judging the worth of the priest is his conformity or non-conformity to the rules of good breeding. If the priest can associate with the leading citizens of a community and show himself fully familiar with the social amenities, he is assured of a permanent place of honor and influence. Let it not be thought that this motive is identical with ambition or personal pride. On the contrary, it can be made a motive of a deeply supernatural nature, because by acquiring and maintaining the esteem of his fellow-citizens the priest promotes the prestige of the Church.

Furthermore, culture and refinement certainly add effectiveness to a priest's ministerial activi-

ties. Great numbers of our present-day American Catholics have had the advantage of a higher education, one of the natural accompaniments of which is an appreciation of the niceties of deportment. Undoubtedly, the gentlemanly priest has a far greater influence over people of this stamp than has the priest who lacks the finer qualities of good breeding. In fact, the gentle courtesy of pastor or curate has often led lukewarm Catholics to resume the practice of their religion—just as, unfortunately, it has sometimes happened that unjustifiable rudeness and vulgarity on the part of a member of the clergy has been the occasion for a Catholic to sever himself from his Church.

Courtesy is an even greater asset when the priest is dealing with non-Catholics. When a person who is not of the household of the faith meets a priest of refinement, patently eager to put the stranger at ease, the favorable reaction experienced by the non-Catholic may be the first step toward the Catholic Church. We must never forget that a concrete, living example of what Catholicism can produce in the way of culture and nobility of character may serve as a more effective *motivum credibilitatis*, at least for the start of a conversion, than the arguments found in textbooks. On the contrary, the non-Catholic coming into contact with a priest of uncouth habits and repulsive demeanor is very liable to contrast him unfavorably with the minister of his own church, and decide to stay with the latter. I fear that there are in our land today not a few Protestants to whom the door of the Catholic Church has been definitely closed by the unfavorable impression of our religion they re-

ceived from priests who betrayed a lamentable lack of affability and culture.

The most potent and most supernatural motive of all for the priest to strive to be a gentleman I would consider to be the example set by the great High Priest, Jesus Christ. In Him whose words and deeds should be the model of every true priest we find the highest type of genuine courtesy. Kindness and gentleness, sympathy for the afflicted, compassion for the erring, forgetfulness of self in His endeavor to provide for the needs of others, deference to the laws and customs of those with whom He lived—such were the characteristics that made the Son of God the most perfect gentleman that ever dwelt on earth. And He was simply putting into practice in His daily life His own great commandment of love for His fellowmen.

Let me emphatically state that I have no intention of implying that the technique of good manners is on a par with those sublime virtues that are the very heart and soul of the priestly life—faith and hope and love for God and zeal for souls and obedience and chastity and the spirit of prayer. It is incomparably more important that the priest should observe the rubrics of the Church at the altar than that he should observe the rules of etiquette at the dinner table. It is far better that he should know and practice the art of conversing with God than that he should be skilled in the phraseology and repartee of fashionable conversation. A well-ordered priestly soul is a much more desirable possession than a well-groomed body. All this I willingly admit—but why should we have to insist on such comparisons? Is it impossible for a man to be

at the same time a pious priest and a polished gentleman? Are the principles of priestly perfection incompatible with the requirements of courtesy? There have indeed been holy priests, and even canonized saints, who neglected—and sometimes even appeared to despise—the ritual of worldly etiquette, yet were universally esteemed and gained many souls for God. But in their case the special outpouring of divine grace made up for the lack of those qualities which under ordinary circumstances would have been necessary for them to win the favor and the respect of those with whom they associated. The average priest cannot expect such extraordinary supernatural assistance, but must have recourse to the normal means of gaining the good graces of his fellowmen. And among such means is surely to be accounted the habit of conducting himself at all times as a gentleman.

CHAPTER I I

THE TRAINING SCHOOL OF THE GENTLEMANLY PRIEST

The seminarian who would resolve to postpone the study of philosophy and theology until he had actually entered the ministry on the plea that he would only then really need a knowledge of these subjects would undoubtedly fail in his examinations and accordingly be refused admittance to the clerical state. In fact, if he even seriously gave expression to such a principle, he would probably be dismissed from the seminary as being sadly deficient in judgment, if not positively unbalanced. Yet, a milder form of this mental kink would show itself in the seminarian who would resolve to wait until his entrance into the ministry before beginning the study and the practice of the rules of politeness. Even if an individual of this type were to enter the ministry with the firm resolution of living up to the requirements of courtesy, it would be surprising if he were successful in fulfilling it. His formative years have passed; and for him to become suddenly a model of good manners after he had consistently neglected the prescriptions of proper deportment for many years would be almost as extraordinary as that one who had been lax in his studies during his seminary days should over

night become a skilled theologian at the very inception of his priestly life. Just as the cleric who aspires to be a learned priest must apply himself diligently day after day to his ecclesiastical studies, so the seminarian who wishes to become a gentlemanly priest must carefully learn and constantly practice in all the circumstances of daily life the requirements of good breeding.

The Catholic young man who enters the seminary to study for the priesthood is familiar with at least the more important elements of good manners. In the majority of cases the sacerdotal aspirant has come from a Catholic home the daily life of which is permeated by the spirit of mutual respect and sincere affection which is at the same time the basis of genuine courtesy and one of the natural fruits of the Christian religion. Moreover, in the Catholic college or preparatory seminary the clerical candidate has come in contact with priests or religious, whose cultural influence must have had some effect in the moulding of his character. Furthermore, if he is imbued with a sincere appreciation of the sublimity of the priesthood, he will strive to have his deportment at all times conformable to the dignity of the exalted office to which he is aspiring.

At the same time, it is quite possible for the young man entering the seminary to be deficient in numerous details of etiquette. It may be that his home training did not include the finer points of table deportment, the proper form of introductions, and other similar niceties of politeness. Besides, for a number of years he has probably associated with the same young men who are now his seminary companions, and having grown

up with them from boyhood, he is liable to retain in his social intercourse with them the unconventional, and at times uncouth, manners that are characteristic of the adolescent male in the company of his youthful friends. Moreover, the seminarian is separated, for the greater part of the year at least, from the companionship of his mother and sisters—a companionship which undoubtedly exerts a very beneficial influence toward the refinement of the growing youth. Because of these several circumstances, the young seminarian may be guilty of numerous faults in the details of deportment; and unless he makes earnest efforts to eradicate these shortcomings during the years of preparation for the priesthood, he will probably continue to commit them the rest of his life. Adequate measures must therefore be taken in the seminary to make the students gentlemen in the fullest sense of the word.

On the part of the seminary authorities, in their dealings with the students, two means especially should be employed—instruction and example. Instruction in correct deportment can be given in the form of lectures or conferences, accompanied by practical demonstrations of the rules of etiquette. Points may be emphasized by proposing in the form of cases various situations in which a priest may find himself, and having the students give a solution. This “case-method,” somewhat similar to the *casus conscientiae* employed in the teaching of moral theology, is used in the training of the West Point cadets, as can be seen in their text-book *Official Courtesy and Customs of the Service*. Even more effective than group-instruction is the advice or admonition

given to the individual seminarian in private. There is no reason why the director or superior should not administer a timely and kindly rebuke to the student who fails in some rule of etiquette, just as he would reprove him for some breach of the seminary rules. An admonition of this nature, if properly given, will usually be well received. I know of an experienced seminary head who is accustomed to request any student who is found to be neglectful about the tidiness of his room to write him a note explaining his attitude in this matter. This method, while free from every trace of harshness, is found to be most effective.

Not only the requirements of gentlemanly conduct but also the reasons why the priest should observe them should be included in the course of instructions given to seminarians. No serious-minded student can fail to be inspired with the desire to become a gentlemanly priest if he is frequently reminded that the dignity of the sacerdotal state demands courteous deportment, and that the ministry of a priest is rendered much more effective if he is a perfect gentleman. Above all, the duty of the priest to model his life on that of Jesus Christ should be adduced as a motive for constant kindness and consideration for the feelings of others in word and in conduct.

As an accessory to the admonitions and instructions given by word to the seminarians, some good books on etiquette should be available to them, and they should be urged to become thoroughly acquainted with their contents. Among the authorities on priestly courtesy whose works should be found in every seminary library are Bishop Kelley, Father Arthur Barry O'Neil,

and Father Albert Rung, the author of *Clerical Courtesy*. Nor should works of a more general character on the subject of politeness be neglected, such as the thorough treatise by Emily Post entitled *Etiquette*.

However, since instruction without example is of little avail, the authorities of the seminary—rector and director and professors—must themselves meticulously conform to the norms of gentlemanly conduct. In word and in deed the seminary priest must constantly exemplify those habits of courtesy and of refinement which he wishes to inculcate on the students. Particularly in his direct relations with the seminarians he must always be careful to speak and act as a gentleman should. Even a slight manifestation of vulgarity or of crudeness in his conversation may neutralize all the good effect of a lecture on courtesy. Nor does the fact that the students are subject to him justify the seminary priest in treating them in a supercilious manner or in manifesting a gruff demeanor toward them. His attitude toward every seminarian must be that of one gentleman toward another.

But, however admirable may be the efforts of the seminary authorities to teach by word and example the art of good manners, the individual seminarian will benefit little thereby unless he is convinced of the importance of cultivating the proprieties and of practicing them in his daily life. They must become second nature to him—they must become so easy and natural that it will be more irksome to be slipshod in his manners than to be courteous. It is not necessary indeed that he be familiar with all that is contained in the books of etiquette. A man whose habitual

garb is a black suit and a Roman collar need not know when a white tie is to be worn and when a black, or on which occasions a tuxedo may be used instead of a dress-coat. Moreover, there are certain *minutiae* of the conventionalities—such as the precise details regarding the use of visiting cards—the neglect of which by a priest will not cause offense to sensible people because they know that the priest is not a man of the world. But there are a number of essential points of etiquette which the priest—and accordingly the seminarian, the priest *in spe*—must know both theoretically and practically, if he wishes to be recognized by persons of good breeding as a gentleman. In the remaining chapters of this booklet we shall present the chief features of the deportment expected of the gentlemanly priest.

CHAPTER III

PERSONAL HABITS

The first essential of a gentleman is perfect cleanliness of person. In former years, when the living conditions of priests were often very primitive, there could have been an excuse for one who was somewhat lax in the observance of this requirement; but nowadays, when sanitary facilities are available to every one, there is no justification for the priest who fails by defect in the use of soap and water. Cleanliness postulates the proper care of the teeth and the manicuring of the nails. A gentleman will also shave as often as it is necessary; he will have his hair cut at suitable intervals, and keep it neatly combed. In the intimacy of the family circle, the man or boy who neglects these details of personal care will probably be reminded of his failings by other members of the household. But generally there is no one sufficiently familiar—or perhaps sufficiently courageous—to admonish a priest who is deficient in such matters. It must therefore be a subject of personal vigilance with him to keep himself clean and tidy. He certainly has an exalted supernatural motive for this in the fact that he daily celebrates the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Due respect for this august mystery demands that he bring to the altar not only cleanliness of soul but also cleanliness of body.

Neatness of attire is also one of the marks of a gentleman. The priest is not expected to be a fop or a fashion-plate—plain, inexpensive, even well-worn clothing is not derogatory to the dignity of his state. But it can always be neat and clean. His trousers should be pressed; his shoes should be polished; his linen, especially his collar, should be clean. Any spots on his clothes should be removed at once. They are especially noticeable on black cloth, and on coat or vest they give the impression that the wearer is not particularly neat at table.

A due regard for the maintenance of neatness in his room is also characteristic of the gentlemanly priest. Usually the religious priest takes care of this himself. The secular priest's room is ordinarily swept and tidied by a servant; but this fact should not make the priest careless. Rather he should strive to make the task of the servant as light as possible. His clothes should be hung in the closet or on the rack, and not thrown on the bed or on the chairs. His desk or table should not be an unseemly jumble of papers and books. The proper place for waste paper is the basket, not the floor. If he is a smoker, he should be careful to deposit the ashes in the proper receptacle. In the bathroom the gentleman hangs up a towel after using it, instead of throwing it into the corner; and he puts his shaving material into the cabinet, instead of leaving it exposed on the wash-basin for the admiration of all who enter.

Especially when he is a guest in the house of another priest or of a lay person must the priest exhibit the virtue of neatness even in the smallest details. For example, if on entering his room he promptly deposits on the clean bed-spread the

valise which has previously rested on the grimy floor of a railroad smoking coach—he will certainly incur the wrath of the housekeeper, and perhaps even find himself no longer welcome in that house. Let me note in passing that the religious priest who fails against the proprieties on the occasion of a visit is liable to drawn down blame not only on himself individually but also on his order.

A man's speech is an excellent criterion of judging whether or not he is a gentleman. I do not think it necessary in a treatise on clerical etiquette to inveigh at length against the type of stories that border on the obscene. Such speech is disgraceful in the mouth of even a lay Catholic; and if a priest were to descend to this kind of language, it would be hard to believe that he is really seriously convinced that his lips are moistened by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ morning after morning. There is also a type of speech which, while perfectly innocent from the moral standpoint, is decidedly vulgar, and this manner of speech is unsuited to a gentleman, and particularly a priest. Again, there are certain topics which are discussed only when necessary, and then only in the most euphemistic terms. Certain occasions especially call for care in the choice of a topic of conversation. The priest who at the dinner table describes with a wealth of detail the horrible cancer of the patient he attended that morning may be a most zealous minister of Christ, but his sense of propriety is undeveloped.

The frequent use of slang expressions by a priest is not commendable. Such expressions

must particularly be avoided in the pulpit. In familiar conversation the occasional use of a slang word or phrase is justifiable; for it cannot be denied that the English language as spoken in America has been rendered more forceful and colorful by many of the slang expressions that have been added to it. However, this manner of speech should never become habitual with the priest. It is particularly deplorable when an educated man becomes so accustomed to slang that he can no longer express his ideas with facility in correct words and phrases.

Mistakes in grammar and in the pronunciation of ordinary words may be excusable in the boy attending the grade school; but in a priest, who has had the equivalent of a university education, they are unpardonable. A cultured person is very unfavorably impressed on meeting a priest who fails in this respect—for example, by such expressions as “We had went,” “He don’t,” “They ain’t,” “The book is laying on my table,” or by such pronunciations as “Toosdy” for “Tuesday,” “fillum” for “film,” or by such misplacements of accent as “ab-so-loót-ly” for “áb-so-lute-ly” or “in-flú-ence” for “ín-flu-ence.” On the other hand, it is a fault to intersperse one’s conversation with studied expressions. Thus, according to Emily Post (*Etiquette*, p. 62) simpler phrases, such as “Let me help you,” “I will find out” are preferable from the standpoint of good manners to more elaborate phrases, such as “Permit me to assist you,” “I will ascertain.”

A gentleman tempers his speech so that his auditors can hear him without difficulty, yet will not be annoyed or embarrassed by his loudness of

tone. It is not edifying to hear a priest in a public place, such as in a railroad coach, carrying on a conversation with a companion in a voice that can be heard by every one else in the vicinity. Laughter may be hearty; but it should never be offensively boisterous. In general, any conduct that renders the individual conspicuous in a public place is to be avoided. The priest may be able to whistle in a way that would make a canary envious; but if he gives vent to this artistic ability by going along a public thoroughfare whistling the latest popular song, his aesthetic urge is clouding his sense of proper deportment.

There is even a proper way for a gentleman to walk, although of course too much mechanical precision is not expected in this matter. But at any rate, the gentleman does not stride along like a contestant in a walking-match, nor does he plant his feet with a thud that makes the floor or the stairs tremble. When seated, a gentleman does not sprawl out, with his feet shoved before him so that the unwary are liable to be tripped. Moreover, the custom that some have at table of hooking their feet about the legs of the chair is better adapted to the lunch counter than to a dining room.

Certain habits, usually engendered by nervousness, must be avoided by one who wishes to be ranked as a gentleman. It is very unpleasant to see a man vigorously scratching his head, and even more offensive to see him picking his nose. Coughing and spitting can usually be avoided in company; and when they are necessary they should be done as unobtrusively as possible. The

man who buries his hands in his pockets and rhythmically jingles their contents, and the man who keeps his coat open and emphasizes the fact that he is wearing suspenders by pulling them forward with his thumbs—these are individuals who will probably not be invited a second time to the home of cultured people.

CHAPTER I V

COURTESY TOWARDS OTHERS

The basis of courtesy toward other human beings from the supernatural standpoint—which is expected to be the predominant motive in a priest—is the sublime truth that they all possess immortal souls which are stamped with the image of God and have been redeemed by the blood of our Savior, and are at least potentially members of the Mystical Body of Christ. The priest who realizes the full import of this Catholic principle will manifest some measure of respect toward every one with whom he comes in contact, whether it be child or adult, saint or sinner, rich person or beggar. Naturally the degree of respect and its outward manifestations vary with the merits and office of the person concerned. Toward those in high civil positions he should also be most respectful, as befits a loyal citizen. The gentlemanly priest will likewise be courteous toward all his fellow-priests. The young priest may regard his older confrere as an old foggy and a crank; but even though this judgment may have some basis in fact, he is not thereby justified in expressing disdain for his senior in speech and in conduct. The elderly priest may vividly remember his younger colleague as a little mischievous boy who served his Mass only a few

years ago, but he should never forget that the character of the eternal priesthood has now elevated that little boy above every earthly potentate. In their associations with one another priests need not be stiff and stilted. Jest and joviality are not forbidden. But no good priest, conscious of his own exalted dignity and that of his fellows, will ever go beyond that point where wit and humor become insult and vulgarity. Above all, anything bordering on "horse-play," which may be tolerated in a preparatory-school student, is banned to the mature cleric, whether he be seminarian or priest.

However, in his dealings with others the priest can fail by excessive obsequiousness as well as by lack of respect. There is nothing praiseworthy from the standpoint of humility or obedience or courtesy in a bearing that betokens extreme timidity. There is no reason why the priest, elevated as he is by his sacred office, should become frightened and non-plussed when he is in the company of some eminent personage. The truth of the matter is that the truly great are very simple and unassuming, and wish to be treated without excessive marks of deference. It is only the man who lacks genuine greatness of soul that is constantly solicitous that others do not forget the position he happens to have attained in civil or ecclesiastical circles.

Courtesy demands that the priest learn and use the titles proper to dignitaries of church and of state. Generally speaking, there are two sets of titles—the formal, which is used in sermons, addresses, or letters of an official character, and the informal which is employed in familiar conversation. Thus, the formal title of a deacon or

subdeacon is "The Reverend John Brown" or "Reverend Sir"; the informal title, "Mister Brown" or "Sir." The corresponding titles for a priest, whether secular or religious, are "The Reverend William Smith" or "Reverend Father" and "Father Smith," or "Father." "Your Reverence" although still employed by some of the good old Irish stock as a tribute of their deep reverence for the priest, cannot be regarded as an ordinary title.*

A monsignor, of whatever rank, has the informal title of "Monsignor"; but the formal title varies—"Very Reverend Monsignor" for a papal chamberlain, and "Right Reverend Monsignor" for a domestic prelate or for a protonotary apostolic. A bishop or archbishop in conversation is addressed as "Your Excellency"—though if one is quite familiar with him, "Bishop" or "Archbishop" is sometimes permissible. The formal title of a bishop or archbishop is "Your Most Reverend Excellency" (*Acta Ap. Sedis*, 1931, p. 22—A few *Monsignori* also have the privilege of being called "Most Reverend Excellency," as this decision of the Ceremonial Congregation states. However, these dignitaries are all members of the Roman curia).

* Until comparatively recent times in England and in America only religious priests received the title "Father," and secular priests were designated as "Reverend Mister" or "Reverend Sir." This distinction is still observed in some parts of Continental Europe. It was chiefly through the efforts of Cardinal Manning that secular priests have received the title "Father" in England (*The Wilfrid Wards*, p. 209).

A cardinal is "Your Eminence," even in the most familiar conversation. This same designation is frequently used as a formal mode of address; but something more would seem to be demanded. The correct salutation for formal occasions would seem to be "Most Honored, Eminent and Reverend Lord" (Ecclesiastical Review, 1912 I, p. 141). If this seems rather formidable, one might compromise on "Most Eminent Lord Cardinal." The Pope is "Your Holiness" or "Most Holy Father," whether in private conversation or on formal occasions.

The informal title for a mayor is "Mr. Mayor," the formal title "Your Honor." The respective titles for a governor are "Governor Green" and "Your Excellency." A Senator, whether federal or state, is called simply "Senator Dunn," in both formal and informal address—never "Mr. Senator" except by a servant or a subordinate. However, a member of the President's cabinet is "Mr. Secretary," and a member of the Supreme Court is "Mr. Justice" or (the head of this body) "Mr. Chief Justice." A congressman or a member of a state legislature is plain "Mr. Ralston." In writing to one of these officials one addresses the letter "The Honorable John Smith" and then appends the particular office the gentleman holds. The chief executive of the United States is "Mr. President," and a letter to him is addressed simply "The President, Washington, D.C." Similarly, the Vice-President is "Mr. Vice-President," and his mail bears the address "The Vice-President, Washington, D.C." Army and navy officers are given their respective titles on formal occasions—for example, in introductions—but in familiar conversation only those above the rank

of lieutenant are designated by their official capacity, while a lieutenant, ensign, etc., is "Mister Wilson" (E. Post, *Etiquette*, p. 496).

In making an introduction, the lower in rank or seniority is presented to the higher. The simplest form of an introduction is merely to repeat the names of the two persons, the more worthy first—for example, "Monsignor Dalton, Father Hunt." One may also say, "Monsignor Dalton, may I present Father Hunt." It is not considered good form to say: "Father Smith, meet Father Jones" or "Father Smith, shake hands with Father Jones." The general rule for an introduction between a man and a woman is that the former be presented to the latter; but in the case of a church dignity—cardinal, bishop or monsignor—the reverse is followed. In fact, according to the outstanding authority in etiquette, Mrs. Post, it is not incorrect to present a woman to any priest (*Etiquette*, p. 5). I would suggest as a solution that when the priest is fulfilling his ministerial duties a woman be introduced to him; but when there is question of a mere social meeting he be presented to her. Thus, when a pastor is inducting his new curate as director of the sodality, and wishes to make him acquainted with its president, he says: "Father Newcome, Miss Harding." But when a priest wishes a clerical confrere to meet his mother, he says: "My mother, Father Temple."

The proper thing to say on being introduced is: "How do you do?" When a man is introduced to another man, they shake hands; when he is introduced to a lady, he merely bows to her. If, however, she offers her hand, he shakes hands with her. The expression "Pleased to meet you"

on being introduced is not considered good form; though on occasions one may vary the "How do you do?" with such phrases as "I am very happy to meet you" or "This is a great pleasure"—supposing, of course, that there is some special reason why this particular introduction is very acceptable.

A gentleman, when meeting a lady of his acquaintance on the street, or when meeting another gentleman in the company of a lady raises his hat and bows. It might be well to add that the priest should draw no distinctions in this matter based on financial or social ratings. His greeting to the humble washerwoman trudging along in her bonnet and shawl should be just as courteous as to the banker's wife riding by in her stream-lined car. However, when the priest is carrying the Blessed Sacrament all signs of recognition should be avoided, as far as possible. Perhaps a slight and fleeting bow to a non-Catholic, who might otherwise be offended, might be tolerated. But Catholics will sense the occasion and readily understand why their priest is giving them no sign of greeting.

It is essential for a gentleman to be a gentleman. The priest especially, as another Christ, must show forth in his words and conduct the patience and the gentleness of Him Who said: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." Moreover, his kindness must be universal in its scope. The priest who is courteous and suave toward the exquisite members of the young ladies' sodality but grouchy and querulous toward the old housekeeper whose charms have long since departed does not show himself a very

apt pupil in learning the meekness of his Divine Master.

Above all, the priest must be an irreproachable gentleman when dealing with others in his ministerial capacity. There are times when he may assume an informal manner of speech in the pulpit—for example, in catechetical instructions to the young, or in conferences to a small sodality. But ever and always any trace of buffoonery or vulgarity is taboo, as unworthy of the ambassador of Christ. Sometimes the priest may find it necessary to condemn vice; and he can lawfully imitate the vehemence and the frankness of our Blessed Savior, but that does not mean that he may indulge in biting sarcasm or bitter personalities. Duty may demand that he treat of matters concerning the sixth commandment; but on no account may he descend to coarse expressions or crude allusions.

In the confessional the patience of the priest is often severely tried; yet he should make every effort to restrain the slightest manifestation of temper, and to be kind and gentle even when he must employ a certain measure of severity. It must subsequently be a source of keen regret to a priest if because of his ill humor and unguarded language a penitent leaves the confessional with the threat never to return. True, the penitent is at fault for not receiving the rebuke with the proper submission—but is the priest entirely guiltless?

Certain unpleasant mannerisms in his relations with others must be avoided by every gentleman. To monopolize the conversation—especially if one has nothing very original or interesting to say—

is an inexcusable breach of deportment. It is equally blameworthy to stare long and fixedly at a person, particularly when he has some external peculiarity which makes him sensitive to such close scrutiny. Similarly, it is discourteous to direct the attention of one's companion to a third person by pointing the finger at this latter. If a gentleman wishes to specify a certain individual in a group, he describes him in words. For example, at an entertainment in the parish-hall, the pastor can tell his visiting brother-priest: "The stout, bald gentleman coming down the aisle is Senator Goodwin" or "The lady seated in the second row and wearing a yellow hat with a red feather gave \$1000 for our new organ."

CHAPTER V

THE ETIQUETTE OF THE TABLE

Eating is one of the functions common to man and to beast. It therefore behooves man to show himself superior to the beast by rendering the act of taking food a human act. The first way to do this is for man to conform his desires for food and drink to the principles of Christian temperance. Another way is to observe the laws of etiquette prescribing in detail the manner in which cultured people shall eat and drink. As is evident, the purpose of the rules of table deportment is to make the act of nourishing the body aesthetic and free from disgusting features. The priest at table should practice not only the virtue of temperance enjoined by the divine law, but also the rules of etiquette prescribed by social usage.

The first and most important commandment of table deportment is to do nothing that might cause disgust or annoyance to those with whom one is eating. A wide variety of faults in violation of this rule can be imagined. Probably the most flagrant offence is to chew one's food in such a way that the process of mastication becomes visible to the entire company. Another unpleasant habit is to speak with the mouth full so that the vicinity is generously sprayed with morsels.

When a person is spoken to at table, he should not reply until he has swallowed what he has in his mouth.

Other infringements of the etiquette of the table are: to eat too rapidly, to stuff the mouth, to bend down to within a few inches of the plate when eating, to smack the lips, to drink soup or other liquid with audible gusto, to tilt back the head when drinking so that the glass or cup becomes a kind of tent over the nose, to scrutinize the dish carefully and then, only after a sufficient examination, to pick what is best. Every one with a modicum of common sense will realize that such habits are utterly unbecoming a gentleman.

The napkin should be placed across the knees, half or three-quarters way unfolded. Only children are allowed the use of a napkin as a bib. At most, a gentleman could tuck the edge of the napkin between the lower buttons of his vest or coat. It must be remembered that the chief purpose of the napkin is to wipe the mouth, especially after drinking. The feet should be placed in front of the chair—not underneath, and above all, not curled around the legs of the chair in lunch-counter fashion. The hands, when not employed, should rest in the lap; only when one is actually eating are the forearms placed on the edge of the table.

When the table has been properly set, there is no doubt as to the order in which the knives, forks and spoons are to be used. One begins with the utensil farthest from the plate and works inward. One must not toy with the implements, nor wipe the plates with the napkin. When a course is finished, the utensils are left

on the plate, to be removed by the waiter. The knife and fork are laid side by side across the plate, not crossed.

The spoon and the fork are grasped like a pen, not held in the fist like a trowel. When one is taking soup or other liquid the spoon is pushed away from the body; but the reverse process is employed in taking solids, such as ice-cream. Liquids are taken from the side of the spoon; solids from the tip. When soup is served in a cup, one takes about half with a spoon, and the rest is drunk directly from the cup.

The cutting of meat is done with the fork in the left, the knife in the right hand. There are two ways of conveying it to the mouth—the American or zig-zag method, in which the fork is shifted to the right hand, and the European method in which the fork remains in the left hand. Either way is permissible. In taking meat, the prongs of the fork may be turned either up or down. It is not proper to pile meat and vegetables on the fork at the same time. Salad is usually eaten only with a fork; though the use of a knife—but not the steel knife used for meat—is not utterly forbidden.

When a large number of persons are dining, the first to be served waits until several others have been served, and then begins. However, those who are served first should eat more slowly, so that all may finish about the same time. When the company is small—four or five persons—it is proper not to begin a course until all have been served.

One should not reach too far for a dish—especially when for this purpose it is necessary

to rise from the chair. A person can always ask his neighbor to pass what is beyond his own reach. Above all, one should never reach for something over another dish, with the probable danger of dipping his sleeve into its contents.

Certain foods are eaten with the fingers—for example, olives, radishes, artichokes, celery. Even asparagus may be eaten in this way if the stalks are not too long, in which case they should be cut and eaten with a fork. Before eating celery, one cuts off the leafy portion. A banana should be peeled and broken into smaller pieces before being conveyed to the mouth; or it can be eaten with a fork.

The proper eating of bread and butter is an important element of table manners. Unless there are individual butter-plates, a piece of butter should first be transferred to one's own plate with the butter-knife. Then the bread should be broken—not cut—into pieces, each large enough for two or three bites, then buttered and eaten. It is absolutely forbidden to butter a whole slice and then proceed to demolish it, leaving a dentist's model of the front teeth, as the attack progresses. It seems hardly necessary to state that one is never permitted to build a skyscraper of bread, butter and jam. One who would be guilty of such audacity would probably not hesitate to lick his fingers after his magnificent structure had been consumed.

Parts of food that must be removed after having been taken into the mouth—such as fish-bones and fruit-pits—should be transferred to the hand as unobtrusively as possible and laid on the plate. They must never be spat out on the plate directly.

The coffee-spoon should be removed from the cup and placed in the saucer as soon as the contents have been stirred. To drink with the spoon in the cup is very inelegant, as well as dangerous to the drinker's eye. The knife and fork, when laid down, should never be propped against the plate, but should be placed side by side on it.

Accidents at table, whether to oneself or to others, should be given as little notice as possible. If a guest upsets a cup of coffee, he calmly puts a napkin over the spot, or leaves the matter to the care of the waiter. If a stout gentleman drops spinach on his shirt-front, his neighbor acts as if he were utterly unaware of the calamity. If the waiter drops a trayful of dishes behind a guest, he does not wink an eyelash, but keeps on calmly with his eating or talking. If he finds a caterpillar in his salad, he does not hold it up triumphantly and cry out: "See what I found"; but conducts the innocent intruder to a place of privacy under a lettuce-leaf. Maurice Francis Egan relates that a guest at a dinner deliberately swallowed a caterpillar with his salad to save his host from embarrassment. But such conduct is heroic.

At a formal dinner a person may refuse a course entirely, but at an informal dinner it is well to partake of something from every course. What about asking for a second helping? At a formal dinner this is not done, but it is quite permissible at a small home dinner—for example, in a rectory where only the pastor and his assistants are present. Every request at table, even if it is only for a glass of water, is to be made to the host, and not directly to the waiter. An

exception can be made at a large dinner, where the waiter can be directly asked for bread, water, a knife or fork, etc. A person thanks a waiter for extra service, but not for the ordinary service.

Doubtless the many details I have mentioned in this chapter seem far-fetched and exaggerated to some of my readers. Yet, I would beg all to remember that often the influence of a priest with people of the world will be considerably lessened if he neglects these niceties. Furthermore, it is a splendid exercise in self-restraint and mortification to observe punctiliously the laws of table deportment. Whatever excuse a priest may allege if he is guilty of poor table manners, the underlying cause usually is selfishness. He is not willing to undertake the restrictions and the self-denial entailed by a strict conformity to the rules of etiquette. And it ill behoves one who is the earthly representative of Jesus Christ to conduct himself in a manner that savors of selfishness.

CHAPTER VI

ADDITIONAL RULES OF GOOD MANNERS

This little treatise on priestly etiquette can suitably be terminated by the brief exposition of certain details of good breeding, not contained in the foregoing chapters:

(1). *Correspondence*:—The first rule, both of charity and of good manners, in regard to epistolary correspondence is, “Every letter that demands an answer should be answered as soon as possible.” There are certain letters which the priest is undoubtedly obliged to answer—for example, those which contain stipends for Masses, those proposing moral or doctrinal questions, invitations to preach, etc. Others certainly require no reply, such as acknowledgments for some favor. Others again are of such a nature that one may doubt whether or not an answer is called for—for example, a letter of congratulation or appreciation for an article the priest has written. In case of doubt, it is always better to send a reply. Letters of reply should always be brief, simple, and to the point. A very commendable resolution for the young priest at the commencement of his ministry would be the firm determination to answer every letter requiring an answer on the same day that he receives it.

One prefixes a letter with the name and address of the one to whom it is being sent—thus “Dr. Charles Clayton, Cleveland, Ohio.” Then, “Dear Doctor Clayton.” A gentleman writing to a lady with whom he is well acquainted addresses her as “Dear Mrs. Elder,” but if he does not know her intimately he begins, “My dear Mrs. Elder.” The usual close of a letter is: “Sincerely yours” or “Faithfully yours.” A letter to a superior is terminated by the phrase “Respectfully yours” or (especially in the case of a high ecclesiastical or civil ruler) “Your obedient servant.” The priest generally concludes his letters to a brother priest with “Yours in Christ” or “Yours in Domino.” Of course, letters to a near relative or very close friend begin: “Dear John” and end “Devotedly yours” or “Yours affectionately.” The priest does not prefix his signature with “Reverend” unless he is writing to some one who is unaware of his ministerial status, in which case he puts “Rev.” in parentheses before his name.

In the address on the envelope, and in the superscription of the letter itself, one uses the definite article when an adjective of distinction is used, such as “Reverend” or “Honorable”—for example, “The Reverend Francis Lydon,” “The Honorable James Marshall.” A married woman always retains her husband’s Christian name “Mrs. Henry Weldon”—even though she is a widow. A letter sent to a married couple is addressed “Mr. and Mrs. John Smith.” This is one occasion when a man takes precedence over a woman.

(2) *Apologies*:—The best form of brief apology is: “Excuse me.” The phrase “Pardon me”

is one of those expressions that are not recognized in polite society, like "Pleased to meet you." Another approved form of apology, which can well be used when the incident involved is of trifling import—as when one has inadvertently jostled some one in a crowded street-car—is "I'm sorry" or simply "Sorry." A true gentleman is always ready to apologize when some untoward incident has occurred, even though he feels that the other party has been principally at fault.

(3). *Smoking*:—No one is scandalized nowadays at the priest who finds soothing comfort in his pipe or cigar or cigarette. Yet, there are times and places when courtesy demands that the priest abstain from smoking. Sometimes, when visiting a sick person he may feel inclined to indulge; but if he has reason to believe that the smoke may irritate the throat or lungs of the patient, he should refrain. In the company of ladies a gentleman always asks permission to smoke, unless they themselves have explicitly invited him to do so.

Smokers should be careful that this habit cause no disgust to others in the form of blackened teeth, disagreeable breath, etc. If the priest smokes immediately before entering the confessional the use of a lozenge or of a mouth wash would be appreciated by his penitents.

Should a priest smoke on the street? I suppose there could be different opinions on this subject; and undoubtedly the solution would have to depend in great measure on local and personal conditions. Father Rung, in his *CLERICAL COURTESY* recommends the following theory of a certain priest. "He believed that smoking was

an occupation of leisure. Accordingly, he concluded that to smoke on the street at times when a priest might reasonably be considered at leisure, as in the late afternoon or in the evening, might be tolerated. Smoking however during so-called working hours, he thought, might give people occasion to judge the priest a man of leisure at all times" (p. 23). However, others believe that the priest should never smoke on the street.

In connection with smoking a word on the chewing of gum may not be out of place. Of course, there is nothing objectionable in this habit if it is done privately; but certainly, this should never be indulged in on the street or in any public place. At most, it might be tolerated on a train, when a person is taking a long trip and can enjoy a certain measure of privacy behind his book or paper.

(4). *Tips*:—The practice of tipping waiters, taxi-drivers, etc. is an abuse; yet, it is a received custom, and since employers expect gratuities to be given to their employees, and diminish their wages accordingly, we must conform to this custom. The priest must, on the one hand, exhibit generosity in tipping, for it would be detrimental to the dignity of the clerical state for him to show himself parsimonious. Yet, on the other hand, he must not be so liberal in his donations as to give the impression that priests abound in wealth. In general, a waiter or taxi-driver is given a gratuity of 10% of the bill—but never less than 10 cents. Twenty-five cents is given to a porter for carrying an ordinary amount of baggage an ordinary distance—for example, from a station to a train. The Pullman car

porter is given from twenty-five to fifty cents for a day trip, fifty cents to a dollar for a trip by night. For a trip across the ocean in the first cabin an individual passenger is expected to expend about twenty-five dollars in tips—for example, five dollars to the room steward, five dollars to the table steward, two dollars to the bath steward, two dollars to the deck steward, etc. (E. Post, p. 668—“*Vogue*,” p. 317—Rung, “*Clerical Courtesy*,” p. 57).

CONCLUSION

The practice of good manners is simply the application to the ordinary deeds of daily life of the Master's great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Certainly then, the priest, bound in a special way to imitate the Son of God, should be an outstanding exemplar of courtesy. And it cannot be doubted that to those priests who portray in their conduct the dignified courtesy of their Divine Model as they go about their mission of comforting the sick and consoling the sorrowing and teaching the ignorant and raising up the sinner, and making smooth the rough ways of life, there will be granted a special aid from on high to bring to their works abundant fruitfulness. Surely the due appreciation of the sublime example of politeness given by Him Who is the *Alpha* and the *Omega* of the priestly life cannot fail to inspire every earnest priest and seminarian with the laudable ambition ever to be a gentlemanly priest and a priestly gentleman.



