

*Dressing  
with  
Dignity*



*Colleen Hammond*

# Dressing with Dignity



Colleen Hammond

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Ken.Henderson@CatholicExchange.com

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# Acknowledgements



We've experienced tons of devilish little incidents working on this project, and have kept Holy Water close at hand to constantly sprinkle everything! I could write another book on all the ways 'the dark side' has attempted to thwart this book.

But this page is the scariest part of the entire project, because I know I'm going to leave someone out!

So for all of you that I have talked to about this project, cried on your shoulder, for those who have encouraged me and have prayed, emailed, and spread the word...*THANK YOU!*

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*Dennis, I love you.*



## Introduction



My journey to modest fashions has been a very, *very* long one. I fell away from the Catholic Faith in college, when I needed it the most. I was modeling and acting to put myself through college—not the most Christian of industries.

My plan was to go to medical school (my undergrad work was in chemistry and psychology), but because of my modeling and acting background, I ended up working in television. I got a job doing the weather on The Weather Channel, so my husband and I moved to Atlanta. My best friend at the time was the Promotional Director for MTV.

My return to the Faith is a long and tragic story, but when I did return, you wouldn't have been able to tell I was Christian by how I was dressed. I guess I thought real beauty was about how much of my form and body was exposed.

I abandoned my skyrocketing career the moment our first child was born. Due to a few disastrous events in our life that followed shortly afterwards (you can hear the details on my reversion CD entitled, *The Making of a Beauty Queen*), we found ourselves broke. And I mean penniless.

We only had one car, which my husband took to work, so I didn't leave the house much. As a stay-at-home mother of one child (and an infant at that!), I had a lot of spare time on my hands.

I walked to the library one day and fumbled across a marketing study that the advertising industry had done in the 1970s. They had used modern

technology to track a man's eyes when he looked at a woman wearing pants. The results of the study so shocked, sickened, and disgusted me that I haven't worn pants in public since. (You can read more about the study in Chapter Three.)

At the time, my closet was full of pants, blouses, sweat pants, and t-shirts. I didn't own a dress. This was going to be a radical change for me! Because we didn't have a dime to spare, I sewed myself one dress (it was too short) that I wore in public—that means to Mass, shopping, or to the park.

I started to read more about modesty, but the only books I could find were not Catholic.

Somewhere, I got the idea that dressing modestly somehow meant plain, dreary, potato-sack type clothing. An Amish woman had more panache compared to the styles I started to wear! My new clothing choices were quite a departure from the chic outfits I used to wear when I was modeling and working in television.

Our marriage at the time was going through some changes and challenges, so I started reading books on marriage. Again, the only books I could find were not Catholic. With no other option, I started researching Catholic Church documents looking for references to marriage, and about that whole “you must obey your husband” thing.

My first book manuscript, *Love, Honor...and Obey?* is about the Catholic Church's teaching on wives being subject to their husbands. I think that the Catholic teachings on the subject are much more beautiful and empowering for women than any other opinion out there.

I traveled the country interviewing people, doing conferences, rebuilding marriages, and (I hoped) reaching souls. So many years of research and study went into the manuscript, and I was anxious to get the book finished, approved by theologians, and on bookshelves.

But in March of 2004 I was a guest on *St. Joseph Radio Presents*, a live call-in radio program heard on WEWN. God spoke to me that day in a powerful way. Why should I be surprised? He usually has to whack me

with a two-by-four to get me to grasp what He's trying to tell me. This situation was no different.

My topic for the show was communication between men and women, building marriages, and of course my upcoming book, *Love, Honor...and Obey?*. But *every single phone call for two solid hours* was from parents asking how to get their daughters to dress in a modest and dignified manner.

I still wasn't hearing God's message.

The last caller said, "Although I'm interested in your topic, Colleen, what I really think God wants you to do right now is to write a book on modesty."

It hit me like a ton of bricks. Looking back over the previous year, I had been asked to do many mother/daughter fashion shows around the country. Was teaching girls how to dress in a dignified manner and develop feminine mannerisms more important right now than *Love, Honor...and Obey?*

I went to a local chapel to pray. Lying there on the pew was the book, *Forty Dreams of St. John Bosco*. I flipped it open and it fell to page 34. My eyes went directly to this passage: "Don't you know that where purity is concerned, *non datur parvitas materiae*—'there is no matter that is not considered to be grave'?"

Grave? Would that mean mortal?

I flipped through the book some more, and every page I went to had a passage to do with the importance of innocence and purity.

Suddenly everything fell into place in my mind. If every sin against purity was grave, and considering what I've seen girls wearing to the store these days (not to mention the beach), it was clear to me that the caller was right. What was needed right now was a book about how to dress in a dignified manner.

I went home and started researching. I was surprised at the massive amounts of material that was available. I was also shocked. It was amazing to see the sudden and rapid decline in fashions over the past 100 years. But what is so beautiful is how Heaven and Holy Mother Church


have tried to warn us and keep us safe. The Church's role in warning us about declining fashions has—unfortunately for women—been the best-kept secret of the century.

Even though there is a massive amount of information and material to share with you, my goal has been to keep the book short, sweet, and to the point. Personally, I don't have time to read as much as I would like to. I have a pile of fabulous looking books stacked next to my bed waiting for me to read them. I can only imagine that you are the same way.

I've tried not to draw conclusions from the material presented. When I saw some of these things for the first time a few months ago, I realized how counter-cultural this was going to be for most of us. I promise you that the information here will give you something to think about—and lots to pray about.


My hope is that you will read it, pray about it, and do what you feel is the right thing for you and your family. May our Blessed Mother guide you!

Within these pages, it is my prayer that you are able to find the information you need to help you in your desire to Dress with Dignity!



CHAPTER ONE

*Out of Eden*



*“And they were both naked; to wit, Adam and his wife: and were not ashamed.”*

*(Gen. 2: 22-23, 25)*

Naked and not ashamed? That’s pretty hard to imagine. I’ll never forget the first time I read that passage from the Bible. I was a young girl growing up in Michigan, and the thought of being half dressed in front of anyone horrified me. To this day the thought of being caught wearing a bathing suit in front of people gives me the willies.

And with the 84% of American women not being happy with their own bodies, I think it’s safe to say that nearly all women would be ashamed to be seen naked.

At least that’s how it was before that whole thing with the serpent and the fruit in the Garden of Eden.

Why weren’t Adam and Eve bothered by their nakedness?

Before Original Sin, Adam and Eve looked at each other with simple, pure, innocent love, and with holy reverence. St. Thomas Aquinas says that our first parents were innocent, and in a state of “original justice”, and Dietrich von Hildebrand called it, “holy bashfulness”.

So, what does it mean that Adam and Eve “were innocent and in a state of original justice”? That our first parents were goofy simpletons walking around the Garden of Eden with wide-eyed foolishness?

No way.

When Adam and Eve came from the hand of God, they were gifted with Sanctifying Grace, so their souls were beautiful and pleasing to God.

Our first parents possessed all the virtues<sup>1</sup>, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit<sup>2</sup>, and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup>.

Adam was infused with supernatural and natural knowledge, which means he knew everything he needed to know about surviving on a daily basis, and he knew what he needed to know about God.

Adam and Eve were not tempted, and their bodies voluntarily cooperated with their will. They would never have said, “I couldn’t help myself!”

They also wouldn’t experience sickness or death, because they were immortal in both soul and body.

In other words, our First Parents were in the state of grace, loaded with virtue, were pretty smart, they weren’t tempted, and they would never get sick or die. Must have been nice.

Life in the Garden of Eden before Original Sin was grand. It was... Paradise! Adam and Eve experienced no fear. No sadness. No regret. No mood swings. No discouragement. No temptation.

Matter of fact, St. Augustine said that Adam and Eve avoided sin, “without a struggle.”<sup>4</sup> Imagine avoiding sin without a struggle. Wouldn’t that be fabulous?

Which brings us to the other wonderful quality they possessed: reverence.

Reverence is respect, admiration, worship, awe, veneration and amazement. It is showing consideration and appreciation for each other, for God’s creation, and for God Himself.

Reverence is also a “holy fear”—a fear of not pleasing God. A fear of not *being* pleasing to God. Those who are reverent also hold back expressing their feelings and aren’t carried away by them.

Sadly, our society has lost the concept of reverence. Let me give you some examples.

Some people have absolutely no sense of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. After Mass, folks shout across the pews in church to their buddies, seemingly oblivious to Our Lord present in the Tabernacle. They are insensitive to those people kneeling and praying their thanksgivings after Mass. A number of people don't genuflect when passing in front of the Tabernacle, and some children aren't even sure why we genuflect in the first place!

What about our loss of reverence for each other?

Whatever happened to simple manners and common courtesy? To the Ancient Greeks, good manners and high morals were the same thing. While we may consider someone in our society 'rude', the Ancient Greeks would have considered an impolite person *immoral* and *filled with vice*.

It's rare these days to see men holding doors for women, or to hear 'please' and 'thank you'. Our family now lives in the South, where it's still common to hear 'sir' and 'ma'am', where men still hold doors for ladies, and try not to use rough language when a lady is present. It's refreshing. But chivalry in our society has sure taken a beating.

What about how our elders are treated? There was a time when the older generation was treated with respect. Youth would approach their elders for advice, realizing that grandma and grandpa's decades of life experience had given them wisdom.

Instead, our culture treats seniors as people who are past their prime, as if they had an expiration date. They are put in retirement or nursing homes, and some family members consider euthanizing them. This lack of respect—irreverence, if you will—for our elders waltzed blatantly through my life few months ago.

I was coming home from the grocery store with my four children. As I drove past the entrance to the store on my way out of the parking lot, I saw a frail, elderly woman leaning on the trunk of a car in the handicapped parking spot. Another woman, whom I later found out was the frail woman's older sister, was struggling to get a wheelchair out of the trunk of their car.

I was about to get out of my car and help them, when I saw a middle-aged man approaching the store from the parking lot. He was looking directly at the two elderly women, and could easily see that the sister was still struggling to remove the bulky wheelchair from her trunk. The man continued to look at the elderly women as he strode past them and right into the grocery store.

I was dumbfounded!

At that moment, another man came out of the store. Surely he would help the two elderly women. Although he clearly saw the feeble woman struggling with the wheelchair, he too walked past.

That was it. I wasn't going to wait any longer.

With tears in my eyes, I climbed out of the car and helped the women. I easily lifted the wheelchair out of the trunk, locked the wheels, and helped the woman into the seat. Then I struggled to push her up the ramp into the store.

Have we really lost that much respect for our elders? Or is it because women have brushed off men's offers to help with an, "I am woman, hear me roar!" attitude? Have we conditioned chivalry out of our men? I think that's part of it. But that topic could fill another book by itself. Let's get back to reverence.

How about the lack of reverence for human life? Slaughtering one's child has become a 'choice' instead of what it really is: murder. Yet it is this maternal function of a woman that is at the crux of her mystique and glory, and why the feminine gender deserves such reverence!

It's an immense privilege for a woman to cooperate with God and her husband in the pro-creation of another human person.

Gertrud von le Fort wrote in, *The Eternal Woman*, that, "To be a mother means to turn especially to the helpless, to incline lovingly and helpfully to every small and weak thing upon the earth."<sup>5</sup> Deep down, I think that a woman who has aborted her child realizes that she has betrayed her sacred mission as a woman.

Whether she realizes it or not, when a woman freely chooses to abort her child, it deeply wounds her feminine nature. It spiritually destroys

her sense of the sacredness of maternity. Realizing that, doesn't it make sense why it takes women so long to recover from an abortion?

We've seen irreverence displayed for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Every day, we experience a lack of respect and reverence for each other by an absence of manners. Our elders are no longer respected. There is no regard for an innocent unborn child. And finally, what about the reverence due to our own bodies, that are temples of the Holy Spirit, created to the image and likeness of God?

Turn on the television these days, and matters of human intimacy are treated as sources of humor. We hear the marital embrace being bandied about in normal topics of conversation. We see sacred moments rendered as a joke on the afternoon talk shows. And worst of all, Hollywood emphasizes marital intimacy in a crass manner in movies aimed at teenagers. My husband tells me that in the workplace, many people (men *and* women!) chat about the marital act in the same breath as the NFL, their jobs, or their family vacation.

And I think it's pretty obvious that the fashions of today are all geared toward destroying a woman's sensitivity for her femininity. Dr. Alice von Hildebrand told me once that when women no longer know how to blush, it is an indication that a society is on the verge of moral collapse. Sounds like we're in a lot of trouble!

Quite honestly, I think we women carry a heavy share of the guilt if we dress immodestly. If we don't treat ourselves with respect, then how can we expect others to do so? By dressing immodestly, we betray our human and moral mission as a woman, which has been given to us by God.

I used to model, and at times was asked to wear some pretty sleazy outfits. By the grace of God, I never had to actually wear anything that I now look back and regret wearing. But supermodel Kim Alexis had a different experience.

In case you don't know who she is, Kim Alexis appeared on more than 500 magazine covers including *Glamour*, *Vogue*, and *Sports Illustrated*. She was the Fashion Editor of "Good Morning America" for three years,

and hosted “Healthy Kids” and “Ticket to Adventure with Kim Alexis” on cable TV.

In her 1998 book, *A Model for a Better Future*, Kim shares that as a supermodel, she was constantly asked to compromise her moral standards. “There are pictures I look back on today and think, Oh, why did I let them talk me into that? I made some choices I’m not proud of.”

Kim also says in her book that many women are playing with fire in the way they dress.

“Dressing like a floozy tells the world, ‘Look at me, want me, lust after me. I’m easy and you can have me.’ Displaying intimate parts of the body is a form of advertising for sex -- so if you dress to attract sexual attention, you can hardly blame anyone else if that kind of attention comes your way. But dressing modestly tells the world, ‘I respect myself and I insist on being treated with respect.’ It’s possible to be stylish and attractive without wearing something that is too short, low-cut, or see-through.”<sup>6</sup>

That’s a supermodel’s experience. But in my life as a mother of four in North Texas, I have also observed that when women are dressed in a feminine, modest, and dignified manner, men will treat them with respect and hold them in high regard.

The other day, my husband was helping our sons cut out swords out of a slab of red oak. They needed a new blade for the saw they were using and asked me to run to the hardware store. I thought, “Should I change my clothes and fix up a bit?”

In the past, I have found that when I am dressed in a neat, modest and feminine manner, men will hold doors for me, help me find things in the store, and offer to carry the items to the car for me. However, if I run to the store dressed in my ‘work clothes’, I am treated as ‘just another one of the guys’. No one holds the door for me. No one helps me find what I need. No one offers to carry the wood to the car for me.

So, before going to get the saw blade, I put on a nicer dress, a quick coat of mascara, and fixed my hair. Guess what? The guy at the hardware store helped me find the saw blade. Not that I was fishing for his help or

was trying to manipulate him, but more that it feels good to be able to help bring out the best in someone else. Isn't it nice to see men who still have a sense of chivalry and treat women with respect?

Why do you think men treat women differently when they are dressed femininely?

Because men are subconsciously very talented at reading a woman's body language. If they see a woman who dresses with dignity and who carries herself with grace and femininity, they pick up on that. They take their cue and approach us with the respect, reverence, and honor our gender deserves. It's also more enjoyable for a man to chat with a woman and appreciate her intelligence when she is dressed tastefully, because he's not distracted by her body.

When a woman dresses with dignity, it appeals to a man's chivalrous nature. Femininity touches a man's heart and appeals to what is best in him. It makes him a gallant knight!

On the other hand, if a woman is dressed in an unfeminine manner, men are more likely to treat her like 'one of the guys'. If she is dressed immodestly, then they would view her as a sexual object, and maybe even treat her in a more crass manner. They certainly won't treat her with respect, and they may even verbally harass her.

I would guess that most women would rather be treated with respect. Doesn't it make sense to fix yourself up a bit before going out? And isn't it also better for the men to see women dressed in a feminine manner so that it brings out the best in them, too?

Education in modesty should begin right from birth. Plato wrote that one of the aims of education is to teach the child to hate what should be hated, and to love what should be loved.

Let's start teaching our children to understand and love the God given differences between males and females, and to respect them. But how?

Little girls (and boys!) should be trained to respect their bodies. I agree with Alice von Hildebrand that, "if little girls are made aware of the great mystery that has been given to them, their purity would be guaranteed."<sup>7</sup>

We have a huge responsibility as parents. Pope Pius XII warned:

*“O Christian mothers, if you knew what a future of anxieties and perils, of ill-guarded shame you prepare for your sons and daughters, imprudently getting them accustomed to live scantily dressed and making them lose the sense of modesty, you would be ashamed of yourselves and you would dread the harm you are making for yourselves, the harm which you are causing these children, whom Heaven has entrusted to you to be brought up as Christians.”<sup>8</sup>*

Pretty strong words. But he has a point. We should make the extra effort to clothe our children in a tasteful manner, right from the start.

It’s really not that hard to find nice, feminine clothing for toddlers. It is only when they get into the “girl” sizes that clothing gets risqué. But it’s worth the effort to look for feminine clothing since it’s important that our girls learn to respect and handle their bodies in a refined manner. In the appendices, I’ve listed places you can find pretty, stylish, and feminine clothing for yourself and your daughters.

St. Benedict understood deeply the effect that our body language has on our soul. He stressed the importance of reverent body posture, and found that it makes a difference whether one kneels or stands, whether one bows or not, whether one sits up straight or slumps over. The more reverent the body posture, the more reverent the soul becomes.

The same is true of learning to be feminine. The more we practice, the more it becomes ingrained in our nature.

Feminine body posture for women includes learning to dress, walk, and sit in a feminine manner. We need to make sure we do not cross our legs in a way that may be undignified or offensive. But I’ll go into that in more detail in Chapter Five. For now, we must re-learn reverence (and teach it to our children!) as it has been eradicated from current generations and our society. And it’s really not as tough as you might think.

# THE HELP YOU NEED TO WIN THE BATTLE AGAINST INDECENT FASHIONS!

In her ground-breaking book, Colleen Hammond challenges today's tawdry fashions and provides you the information you need to protect your loved ones from the onslaught of tasteless clothing.

There is a difference between dressing attractively and dressing to attract. Colleen shares real life examples of how to accentuate the grace and beauty of your femininity—'modest' doesn't mean 'frumpy'!

## *Dressing With Dignity covers it all!*

- The history and forces behind the change in fashions
- How to talk to teenagers about the privilege of femininity so they will want to dress with dignity.
- How to awaken chivalry in men and be treated with respect
- How to regain and teach the lost charm of inner (and outer!) femininity
- How to dress in an attractive, dignified, and classy manner
- Specific documents about manners of dress from the Magisterium, the Popes, and the Saints
- Comprehensive guidelines for choosing tasteful attire
- Resources on where to find pretty, modest clothing
- And much more...

Without a doubt, *Dressing With Dignity* is about to rout the fashion world, which has treated generations of women with disgrace. Colleen's refreshing insights will help you conquer the world of indecent fashion!

Colleen Hammond is a former cable network anchor, image consultant, actress, model, and beauty queen—who abandoned it all to be a stay-at-home mother. An award-winning writer, radio and television talk show host and speaker, Colleen is currently producing a DVD series that will teach social graces to young men and ladies. She currently resides in North Texas with her husband and four children.



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