

## “PUTTING ON OUR SUNDAY BEST” WORSHIP THE LORD IN HOLY ATTIRE

People have asked me what I might have chosen as a career had I not felt called to the vocation of the priesthood. It is a valid question, one to which I do not have an equally good answer. Perhaps I'd work in the airline industry, pouring over airlines schedules and crunching numbers to devise more efficient routes, or maybe I'd have a career in the State Department, diplomatically trying to represent our government. It's a moot point because I love my life as a priest. But I do know this much. I never would have made it in the arena of high fashion or clothing sales! Once, while mindlessly glancing at the Magazine section of *The Sunday New York Times*, I could not believe my eyes. There I saw an advertisement for a \$35,000 alligator bag and a \$6,000 pair of shoes in a chic 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue boutique.

People have argued for centuries about what constitutes good fashion and style. I'm not going to wade into that pool! It changes from generation to generation and always has. I may never fully understand, but that is immaterial. Still, it beggars the imagination to consider what could possibly motivate someone to spend such sums of money to adorn the human body. Having said that, I also think that some priests can spend way too much money on sacred vestments, and in some cases I am uncomfortable with the amounts expended, most especially if parish funding is tight. Recall the words of Ash Wednesday... “Remember man that thou art dust and unto dust you shall return.” We can't take any of this with us, folks.

But I too have fallen prey to materialism and covetousness. When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I begged and **begged my parents for new Nike leather tennis shoes**. “But Mom, all the kids have this pair.” They were white with a red swoosh! Sure they were more expensive, but they were the “in” shoes, and I just had to have them. My parents finally gave in, and I received a pair for my birthday. The much-coveted shoes were promptly stolen the very first time I went roller-skating (yes, now I am really dating myself in the mid-70's) and I literally had to be picked up in stocking feet! I quickly reverted to my Converse All-Star canvas shoes. So much for my brief foray into high fashion, or so I thought. Guess what— they have come back in style!

For me, clothing will always be more practical than prophetic, but I certainly understand why people desire to look their best. Dressing up is important for special events, and we all feel just a bit more special when we decorate our homes for a holiday or take the extra time to dress up for a special occasion. So it makes good sense as we approach the warmer weather in June (finally!) to pay close attention to our sartorial habits. It seems reasonable to expect that we put on our Sunday clothes for Mass, and fight off any temptation or practical considerations (e.g. “we're going to a picnic right after Church anyway...”) to “dress down.” This is the time to stay focused on the Lord, and we do so even by means of our appearance. The Psalmist exhorts the faithful: “Give to the Lord the glory due his name; **adore the Lord in holy attire.**” (Psalm 29:2) Does our manner of dress on Sunday give glory to God?

No, Mass is **neither** a New York fashion show; (heaven forbid), nor is it a time just like any other time on the weekend. It is the most important act of our week, bar none. People ask me occasionally what is appropriate attire for Sunday Mass. I would answer that for our gentlemen collared shirts are most appropriate, ties are certainly always welcome, and dress pants are preferred. For adult men, shorts appear awfully casual for Sunday Mass. For our ladies, skirts of a modest length or dress slacks are preferred, considering the canons of modesty, mindful of appropriately covering the shoulders. In so doing, we show our reverence for God and we honor our act of Sacred Worship. Clothing can be cool, comfortable and modest at the same time.

Will we turn people away at the door? Of course not! Nor will I look askance at folks who enter our doors dressed perhaps a bit too casually. That is never my intention, nor the point of this column. Rather, I am encouraging people to **think carefully** and **pray** about what it means to put on our Sunday best. Especially in the case of our Sunday 5:00 p.m. Mass in the summer, it can get quite toasty in Church. In fact, many people are returning from some event out and about. I fully appreciate that and am delighted you are coming to the Cathedral! At the same time, I encourage your creativity; consider throwing some clothing into your car that could easily be added to what you are wearing earlier in the day. Just a little “food for thought” as you head off

to picnics and Graduation parties. God bless you all and thank you for worshipping here on Sundays.

- In what may just be the lamest excuse ever put forward, the government of the **Philippines** has outlawed the hanging of rosaries and crucifixes from rear view mirrors in cars as a “safety” concern. Apparently, they block people’s view of the road. In truth, also banned were cell phones and air freshener products. Sadly, the President of this the largest Catholic country in Asia is no friend of the Church. He has routinely insulted and excoriated Catholic bishops in public.
- You would never know from the mainstream media, but refugees continue to flee North Africa in overcrowded and untrustworthy vessels in hopes of making it to islands off the coast of Italy such as Lampedusa. In a recent weekend, nearly 200 out of 6000 refugees who fled died, bringing the number of dead to nearly 1200.
- **Theology on Tap** gets underway on Wednesday, June 14 at O’Gara’s located at the corner of Snelling and Selby. The six-week series schedule may be found online. I am grateful to the Cathedral Young adults for their work on this program, as well as their assistance with Sunday afternoon Confirmation ushering duties. Their presence has been a big help to our regular ushers.
- Kudos to the **Diocese of Brooklyn** for some very creative advertising on behalf of the Church. They had a billboard depicting Michelangelo’s creation panel (the hand of God reaching out to touch Adam’s) and used that image to advertise an evening of Reconciliation all throughout the Diocese on Monday of Holy Week. The ads showed at Citi Field, home of the **New York Mets**, right at the beginning of the baseball season.
- When I read that a Slovak climber had died while trying to reach the summit of Mount Everest, I was concerned. At the final stop before Everest Base Camp, I had visited briefly at breakfast with a Slovakian gentleman who was eating alone. He explained that he was training in the area and that in May he would attempt to summit Mount Everest. Sadly, when I saw a photo on a news story, I knew in an instant that it was the same man. May **Vladimir Strba** (age 50) rest in peace.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John Ubel  
Rector