

On May 13, 1917, during the first apparition of Our Lady at Fatima, in some of the first words that were exchanged between Our Lady and Lucia, Lucia asked her about a girl who had died recently. This girl used to go to Lucia's house to learn weaving from Lucia's sister Maria. Lucia asked, "Is Maria de Neves now in heaven?" Our Lady replied, "Yes, she is."

Today we are celebrating the feast of All Saints, all those like that friend of Lucia dos Santos at Fatima, who are in heaven, though we don't know who they are. **This is what we are all called to become is saints.** God gives sufficient grace for every soul to make it to heaven, and to the level of sanctity that He has called each soul. One of the greatest deterrents for us becoming holy that is neglected is not *avoiding the occasions of sins*. St. Bernardine of Sienna says that of all counsels, the best of all counsels is the counsel of *avoiding the occasions of sin*, even calling it the foundation of religion.

Just before the first apparition of Our Lady at Fatima, the parish priest of Fatima gave a sermon at which the three children were present, in which the parish priest addressed a pastime that had become popular. He gave a sermon condemning dancing in public and little Jacinta Marto was disappointed because she had loved to dance. But then Our Lady appeared to the children. And after the visions began, all three children gave up dancing, realizing that this led to occasions of sin.

Now, what is the moral issue here? First off, *married* couples dancing *with their own spouses* is not a moral issue – for married couples this is perfectly fine. *Irish step-dancing* is not a moral issue. However, what about *unmarried* young men and women dancing together?

To understand this question, let's keep in mind that a **mortal sin** against purity can be committed right in one's mind. We're not necessarily going to see *external* sins committed on the dance floor at a well-chaperoned swing dance. But can we say the same of interior sins?

So fathers, imagine what you think if you came outside after Mass and saw a teenager with his hands on your daughter in all the places he would have to have them for a swing dance? In other words, if you were to see him holding your daughter's hands, sliding his hand along her arm, pulling her towards him, and pushing her away, supporting her by the back as she leans back in a dip. His hands in her hands, his hand on her back. Would you have any problems with a teenager having his hands on your daughter like that? I don't even like describing all that, but that just describes a swing dance. If you saw a teenager holding your daughter as we've just described, can you say you know he *won't* be tempted with impure thoughts and desires? What makes a teen touching your daughter like that any less an occasion for temptation, simply because at a dance this takes place where it is darker, there are a *bunch* of teens doing it and there is music? What do you think all that bodily contact in dancing that the boy is not used to disposes him towards?

Parents, are you over 25 years old? Then physiologically your teenager has stronger drives than you do in this area; statistically up to 50% more – more drive means more temptation. So parents, consider that internally your teens have *more* temptation in this area, *less experience* in how to handle it, *less used to* this kind of contact, *less maturity* and *less understanding* of the serious consequences of giving in. In other words, the very ones who will be *most* tempted and *most* likely to succumb by an occasion of sin in this area are *teenagers* – and we want them having all this contact? Parents, do *we* have perfect self-control? Can you see the imprudence of putting one's *more*-tempted teens into these situations? Adults have *done* more and seen more than teens, perhaps. Things that would put a teen into a very near-occasion of sin might not even phase *an adult* anymore.

Once, a Catholic mother who favored dances tried to explain to me why I shouldn't oppose dances. This was her reason: she said, "Dancing breaks down the physical barriers between young men and women without involving the marital act." She knew what dances do – they *do* break down

those physical barriers. Let me ask: with society trying with all its might to make **sure** there are no physical barriers *left* between boys and girls, is it a good idea to help that process in any way? Just because there are many things in society that are more immodest than dancing, and that lead to impurity, that doesn't mean that unmarried boys and girls dancing together *isn't* immodest and won't lead to impurity. The danger of sins of impurity that take place later is one of the biggest dangers in dancing. If one thinks it *won't* lead to temptations toward private sins, then one is very naïve.

How many of our teenagers are ready to get married? If they are not in a position to get married, then what are we doing putting them in positions where they will get swept off their feet emotionally? This is what dancing does to girls.

One might be tempted to say, "Father, that is *your* take on it." The reality is that *my opinion* doesn't matter.

Does the Church have an official position on dances? Believe it or not, the Church **does** have an official position on dances. Traditional Catholics praise the Baltimore Catechism. Are you aware that the First 3 Councils of Baltimore and the 10th Baltimore Council – the same Baltimore Councils that gave us the Baltimore Catechism – all denounced dances? The Second Council of Baltimore (1868) says: "We consider it to be our duty to warn our people against those amusements which may easily become to them an occasion of sin, and especially against those fashionable dances, which... are fraught with the greatest dangers to morals." Do you know what 'those fashionable dances' were? Fast waltzes...

The Vatican even weighed in on this, addressing America by name because dancing was so widespread here. On March 31, 1916 a decree of the Vatican (the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, with the approval of Benedict XV), decreed as follows:

"In the century just passed, *in the states of North America*, the custom began whereby *Catholic* families would gather at dances... The reason and *justification* for this was given that Catholics might get to know each other and be united more intimately in the bonds of charity and love, and at the same time they would serve as a fundraiser for some pious works." The decree went on to say that "*all priests... and other clerics are absolutely forbidden from promoting and supporting dances, even if* they are held to aid pious works or for some other holy purpose. Moreover, all clerics are forbidden to attend such dances, should they be given by lay people." A.A.S., 8 (1916), p. 147-149 ([http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS%2008%20\[1916\]%20-%20ocr.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS%2008%20[1916]%20-%20ocr.pdf)) You can find this decree on the Vatican's website today.

A year after this decree came out, an American bishop asked the Vatican: "Are dances given ***in the daytime***, or at night but ***not*** protracted to a *late* hour... but conducted in the manner commonly called a picnic, included in the condemnation of March 31, 1916?" The reply, dated December 10, 1917, and approved by the Pope himself, stated that yes, dances done during the daytime or at a picnic are *indeed* included in the Vatican's prohibition. [AAS, X (1918), 17 ([http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS%2010%20\[1918\]%20-%20ocr.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS%2010%20[1918]%20-%20ocr.pdf))].

In a New York Times article dated June 16, 1916, which is in this week's bulletin, the headline reads, "Pope's Dancing Ban Sent to Churches". The article opens, "Dancing has been forbidden at all Catholic entertainments." The Cardinal of New York, Cardinal Farley had the priests of his diocese read the letter you'll find in the bulletin from the pulpit, in which he said, it is "imperative for us to offset the moral danger that threatens our young people and to ***positively prohibit the holding of entertainments of any kind whose principal feature is dancing.***"

Traditional Catholics wish the Cardinal of New York today would have greater courage and clarity. Why would we not follow when a former Cardinal shows courage and clarity about *this* moral issue?

Now I might lose a parishioner or two over this – but I'll be quite honest with you: I would rather lose a couple of parishioners than lose the souls that I will be held accountable for (Heb 13:17). The teens of the parish are my spiritual children. One mortal sin – that is all it takes to lose a soul. Now, I may not convince all of you, but I would like us to reflect on these words:

Ezekiel 33:8-9 – “I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel... if thou dost ***not*** speak to warn [him]: that man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou tell [him], that he may be converted from his ways, and he be ***not*** converted from his way: he shall die in his iniquity: but thou hast delivered thy soul.” I have given the warning. *I pray that it be received.*

I began by speaking about Our Lady appeared at Fatima, and how Lucia asked her about a girl who had died recently, if she was in heaven, and Our Lady replied, “Yes, she is.”

Then Lucia asked about *another* other girl who had also taken weaving lessons from her sister and had also recently died. “And Amelia?” Lucia asked. Our Lady replied, “She will be in purgatory until the end of the world.” I don't know about you, but I want to make sure that my plans after death don't include a whole lot of flames. It was not in the children's plans either. All three children gave up dancing after the visions began, realizing that it was an occasion of sin.

Let's close with one last story. Ars, France once had a problem with impurity and paganism. By targeting vice & esp. dances, St. John Vianney got at the ***root*** of the impurity. And after putting an end to the dances in his parish St. John was able to boast once, proud of his parishioners as he showed a visitor to Ars the Catholic cemetery – “*here* is my collection of relics!” **We are all called to become saints** – this is what I wish for you! – that one day the Feast of All Saints will one day be ***your* feast day also!**