

July 21, 2019

Dear Friends,

We were talking in the Rectory the other day about baseball and how the audience has changed so significantly over the past forty or fifty years. When you see old newsreels of games from the forties and fifties you will notice that those in attendance are almost all men and not only that they are almost all wearing suit coats, dress shirts and ties—to a ball game. Because that is what you did then. It was a treat, something special, a little bit out of the ordinary. You wouldn't wear your work clothes to a game you would dress up a bit. It said something about yourself to dress like that. It was about self-respect and identity.

Last night I saw many women and many children and no men wearing suit coats or ties. We don't wear them to ball games anymore. So ask yourself when do you get dressed up now? Is it when you go out to a nice restaurant for dinner? Is it on a date to a Club or to a Show downtown or up in New York? Is it a wedding? Ever notice the audience on America's favorite Videos? They are all. Always, dressed up. That's for a television show.

What about when you come to Sunday Mass? The church is still the House of the Lord. Our Lord is still present in the Blessed Sacrament—truly, really present—not symbolically present. It is still the Lord who invites us into his home and invites us to take our place before his table. It is still the Lord who prepares to nourish us with his encouraging word and sustain us with his Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine. Isn't the Lord worthy of our putting on our better clothes?

When I would go to Guatemala the peasants wore to church what they wore everyday because they were the clothes they had. It was similar in Mexico earlier this year. On weddings and feast days there was sometimes really nice clothes but often there was simply the addition of something that would serve as an upgrade, perhaps the addition of a scarf or something for color. When that is all you have then that is fine. But here we have a variety of kinds of clothes and it makes sense to me that we should dress up for a visit to the Lord's House. Like the men attending the baseball games of yore, it says something about us to dress up. It says something about how we see ourselves and what is really important.

Nine years ago I went to Medjugorje for a week to pray. In speaking to the visionary Ivan when I was there, we asked him what the Blessed Mother wears when she appears. It is very simple but beautiful and on feast days such as Christmas and Easter she puts on her very best—to honor her Son. To honor her Son. That was enough for me to think about. What can I do to honor her Son? How can I show in my demeanor, my life, my presence that I recognize who the Lord is and what he has done for me? The way I dress is one of those ways. We do it all the time. Perhaps we should restore it to our presence in church. It is just a thought.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry