

Dear Friends,

not so beautiful on the inside. However, the smokescreen of sensible appearances fades away in time and the person becomes known for what is within, whether it be pure or unclean, glowing or dark, full of virtue or full of vice.

When He became man, Christ's strength was in virtue and not muscle, His glory was rooted in having an immaculate soul and not fine clothes, His personality was rooted in the kindness and serenity of His Sacred Heart and not in being the "life of the party."

For us, then, our beauty rests upon the same: What is inside of us matters most. Since this principle also pertains to all people, we should not be caught up in their externals, but what is on the inside.

Hence, true friendship and true love of another person does not rest upon the external and loves the other person entirely—mind, emotions, and heart. This is why a married couple can fall more deeply in love with each other even though their external beauty fades over time. In short, the other person is loved as a whole person and not just for some features.

The obvious advice, then, to those seeking to enter the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is that courtship should be spent learning who the other person is on the inside. And what greatly hinders this knowledge is the engaging in a physical relationship before marriage. In crossing the boundary set by God before marriage, the couple focuses on the external, and the relationship remains on a superficial level.

When such a couple enter marriage, the marriage will have a shaky foundation, and soon the defects of the other person begin to surface. Unless true love takes root in the marriage, the imperfections of the other person can seem to be unbearable. Hence, before marriage, communication is the tool whereby the inside of the other person's mind and heart is revealed instead of remaining hidden behind the curtain of pleasure.

Even in choosing friends, internal qualities are more important than external ones, as we should seek acquaintances who have goodness inside. In doing so, the result is that the other person's goodness should radiate upon us and we, too, begin to act similarly.

To reinforce how inner beauty is more important than external beauty, we can also turn to the Mother of Our Lord. From all eternity, God decided in His infinite mind the best manner of entering the world—the best time, the best place, and the best way. "After" He considered all

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His options and all possible scenarios, God's plan to live among us was through the womb of a woman.

And what should we expect His mother to look like? Returning to the idea that no human being chooses the body he will have on earth, we know that God fashioned a body for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

From all eternity, His image of motherhood would be realized in her. It is only fitting, then, that God, the Creator of all things, for Whom all things are possible, would do all things possible for her and not place any limits on the perfection of His own mother.

God made her the perfect woman. She was perfect at her conception, and every moment thereafter. She continued to grow in grace, never lacking any perfection throughout her life. Being immaculately conceived in her own mother's womb, Our Lady was fashioned as the unblemished passageway for the infinite God to pass from eternity into time.

Yet, even though she was the fairest of all women, she, like her Son, was beautiful more because of what she was like on the inside. Her inmost virtue radiated in her daily life.

Even though she was most beautiful, her concern was not in her external appearance, but rather, in her internal beauty, because this is what God "sees." She ardently strove to please her Creator solely and wholeheartedly, and she did not spend her time thinking of herself, or gazing at herself in front of a mirror. Even up to the present time, when she appears to men, she is not wearing the fashions "in vogue", but garments radiating dignity and signifying her internal loveliness.

We, then, have the examples of Our Lord and His mother, which show that our attention to how we look should be upon inner beauty. By imitating them, we demonstrate that we are concerned about how we are seen by God, not by other people, and we seek the praise of God and forgo the praise of men.

For He, from Whom nothing is hidden and Who is not blinded by our external appearances, considers what is inside our heart and mind instead of looking at the body He has given us.

In Christ,

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