

# **PHILOSOPHY NIGHT**

## *“American Catholic Etiquette”*

**AUGUST 27TH, 2024**



**Wedding of Jacqueline Bouvier and John F. Kennedy, 1953**

**ST. STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH, PORTLAND, OREGON**

**ETIQUETTE:**

The forms required by good breeding, or prescribed by authority, to be observed in social or official life; observance of the proprieties of rank and occasion; conventional decorum; ceremonial code of polite society. (**American Heritage Dictionary, 5th ed.**)

**The following from American Catholic Etiquette, by Kay Toy Fenner. Published by Hawthorne Books. 1960.**

...the reader may ask, why Catholic etiquette? Is correct Catholic behavior wholly different from that of non-Catholics? Certainly not. ...But the code of behavior for Catholics does differ at some points...Mother Church has given us seven sacraments to give us grace and help us to earn Heaven. The reception of most of them has some social connotations and accompanying social functions. The primary purpose of this book, therefore, is to define and explain for laymen the social duties and privileges entailed in the reception of the sacraments and in the social functions accompanying them (xxi-xxii)

**GUIDANCE AND MANNERS FOR TEEN-AGERS**

For the purposes of this book, we are defining a teen-ager as a child between the ages of sixteen and nineteen.

**Rules of Conduct**

Speaking very generally one may say:

- The teen-ager's primary responsibility is still to do the very best of which he is capable in school.
- No week-night social life is allowed during the school year.
- Know where your child is going, with whom, and when he or she expects to get home, on all evening engagements.
- No entertaining is done at home without an adult present. No permission is given to visit in a friend's house without an adult present.
- Discourage steady dating before the last half of junior year, at the very earliest.
- Try to know your child's friends. You still have the right to forbid him to associate with one whose general reputation is bad or one whose behavior, on some occasion upon which you were present, was objectionable. Girls should be discouraged from going out with boys more than four years older than themselves. Their attitudes, interests and privileges will be too different from their own, and it will cut them off from their own age group (p. 333f).

**MANNERS**

The manners of a teen-ager should, when occasion requires it, be those of a well-bred adult, plus the little extra deference to their elders that so becomes this age. This does not mean that a teen-ager will always so behave, nor be expected to do so. In the bosom of his family, or with his contemporaries, he will frequently be boisterous, uncouth and silly a natural outlet for the

high spirits common to this age. It does mean that teen-agers should instinctively employ the good manners you have taught them at school, in business, or on social occasions when conventional behavior is expected of them (335).

Both boys and girls should rise when an older person enters the room. They should be particularly careful to do this for clergymen and religious, teachers, parents other than their own. They should rise for their own parents at a social gathering, in their own home or away from it, but need not observe such ceremony as a part of daily life. At a large party they rise, not when an older person enters the room, but when he approaches the group they are in, or when he speaks to them. Boys address men over forty as "Sir." both sexes should take care to add, "Mrs. Smith," "Miss Wilson," to their remarks to women of all ages (335).

If teen-agers have not been taught how to introduce people or how to behave at a formal dinner, in a restaurant or nightclub, at the theater, while traveling, they should now learn. They should also learn how to be part of, or "go down" a receiving line (335).

## **Girls**

Teen-age girls act as hostess for luncheons, teas, and dinners for their own age group, and should master the duties involved in doing so. They should also learn how to preside at a tea table and serve after-dinner coffee (336).

How to receive a compliment gracefully worries some teen girls. The first requirement is to take it at its face value as genuine, even though one suspects that one is being teased. Even if one fears that the remark is sarcastic, the best rejoinder is always to replay as if the compliment were a sincere one with a glance of surprise and pleasure and a bright, "Thank you! That's nice to hear," or "It is kind of you to think so." If the compliment was a genuine one, it has then been duly acknowledged; if it was offered in sarcasm, the intended unkindness has glanced off its mark.

Embarrassment, or fear of appearing conceited, makes young girls reject a compliment with a remark like, "Oh, you can't think that! Ann's hair is far prettier than mine!" or "This old rag! I've had it for ages. Silly boy, you've seen it lots of times." Such a response makes the giver of the compliment, who intended to please by his remark, feel awkward and silly. It is always to be avoided (336).

Suppose a boy asks you well in advance to a dance you want to go to but not with him. If you refuse him, must you stay home from the dance even though someone else asks you? Not if you are tactful. Just say, "I'm so sorry. I am busy that night." If he says "Are you going to the dance?" Giggle and say, "I didn't say. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll save you a dance, O.K.?"

If you do get another bid and go to the dance, he will think the date was made before he asked you. If you do not, the subject will probably not come up again between you. If it does, say, "I was just teasing you. I never said I had a date for the dance" (337).

Suppose a boy asks you for a first date, and you really do have a previous engagement. How can you encourage him to try again? Say, with real regret, "Oh, what a shame!" That's the night of the Yacht Club dance. I made a date for it ages ago. Call me again soon, please? I would have so liked to go to the open house *with you*."

## **Boys**

Teen-age boys should know how to escort a girl or woman into and out of theaters and restaurants, up and down a staircase, on and off a bus, into and out of a car. They should rise when any woman joins a group at table or anywhere else. They should be briefed on tipping and paying checks. At a dance, they should always dance at least once with the hostess and once with their dinner partner, if a dinner preceded the dance. When several couples go to a dance together or sit at table together around the dance floor, courtesy requires that he dance at least once with each girl in the group. Modern young people, however, are so addicted to dancing only with the partner with whom they go to the dance that they often ignore this simple courtesy. It is still the right thing to do (337).

### **RULES FOR DATING**

#### **For Boys**

- a) Call for a girl at her home. Ask her to meet you elsewhere only in special circumstances. If you live in one suburb and she in another, you might ask the girl with whom you have a theater date to meet you at a respectable place in town, to avoid being late for the performance. But you take her to her door when going home, regardless of how far it is. You may not ask a girl to meet you anywhere, even under circumstances, unless you have previously called at her home, and met one of her parents.
- b) Go to her door and ring the bell. Go in, if invited, and meet her parents.
- c) Do not use her car, even though she has one and you do not. To use hers makes you seem less the man and the escort it puts you in a false position.
- d) Plan your dates in advance whenever possible and plan to do something. It is more fun and less moral risk to go dancing, see a show, or play cards than it is to drive aimlessly about the countryside or lounge in a tavern.
- e) When asking a girl for a date, tell her what you have planned, or give her her choice of several amusements, thus: "Ralph Saunders, Dave Thorpe and I thought it would be fun if you and Betty Gregory and Janet Giarve went to the square dance at Lakeside. Ralph will have his car. We will leave at eight and be home around half-past-one. Can you make it?" This kind of invitation tells a girl how to dress, leaves her an opening to refuse gracefully, and provides her with the information most parents require of a daughter. (Where are you

going, with whom, who is driving, what time will you be home?)

If you have nothing planned for your date, say, "If you are not busy Saturday I thought you might like to go to the antique car show, or dancing at the Crillon. Which would you prefer?" She can then make a choice, and know that her selection is within the limits of what you had planned (338).

- f) Assume all expenses for any date unless it was previously agreed to be some kind of a Dutch treat party (agreed by a group, never by the two of you) or unless your date is hostess at a party, at home or elsewhere. In the latter case, and in the case of all entertaining where you are guest, not host, a man must be prepared to take care of small expenses that may arise – taxi fare, tipping parking lot attendant, purchasing cigarettes, or buying a round of drinks. Do not find this advice discouraging. A girl who likes her escort is happy to ride a bus, take a walk, play records or go to church with him – prefers it to an elaborate date with one in whom she is not interested.
- g) The rules of our society give the man the power of choice as to whom he will date – that is, to be the aggressor. The girl, except in some special cases such as home parties or proms at girls' schools, has only the right of refusal. This power of choice obligates you to behave in a certain way: having made and kept a date, always behave as if you were enjoying yourself. You need never go out with the girl again (the power of choice), but you did seek this date. Even though the girl is not as attractive as you had fancied – too serious, too silly, too dull – you must not pain and embarrass her by showing your disappointment. Even if the girl's behavior is pointedly disagreeable, you must act the gentleman. Do not do or say anything you will later regret. It is particularly important to show no displeasure or chagrin if a "blind date" is not all you hoped she would be. Remember please, the girl ran quite as much risk as you did – and may be equally disappointed! For the space of an evening, pretend to be pleased with one another, and enjoy yourselves as best you can. When a girl asks you to a party, you may of course refuse if the girl or the date does not appeal to you. But, once you have accepted you must keep the engagement and must try to appear as if you were enjoying the party and the girl's company. IF you do not intend to ask her for further dates, you need not imply that you will. Just make this one evening a happy occasion for her. The fact that she asked you to this party, one of the rare occasions on which she had the power of choice, show that she is attracted to you and looked forward to spending an evening with you. Don't disappoint her.
- h) Don't put a price on your date's favors. A kiss is an expression of liking. It cannot be bought with a dinner or theater ticket, but must be earned by winning her affection.
- i) Don't take her anywhere where you are not proud to be seen.
- j) Don't urge her to go anywhere or do anything of which she seems to disapprove. She has the right to live up to her own standards of conduct, even though you may think them unduly strict.

- k) Help her to keep the rules and hours her parents have laid out for her. Do this cheerfully and without grouching. For you to act otherwise puts her in an uncomfortable position: she must either displease you or disobey her parents.
- l) Promise yourself that you will never be the one to introduce any girl to a person, place or situation which may be a source of harm to her.
- m) Always remember: an escort is, in one sense, a guardian. For the space of an evening, a girl's immortal soul is in your care. Cherish it!

## **For Girls**

- a) Never date a boy you do not know. You may be said to "know" a boy who is in your classes at school or lives neighbor to you, with whom you have a speaking acquaintance, even though no one has actually introduced you. You could safely date such a boy if he asks you. Otherwise, never date a boy who has not been introduced to you by someone who knows him and knows you. This is not merely a social rule. It is physically and morally dangerous to date a stranger, no matter how attractive he seems or how romantic the circumstances under which you first say him.
- b) Always require an escort to call for you at home. Don't meet him elsewhere except in special circumstances (as outlined under Dating for Boys) and then very rarely. If he calls for you by lunging in his car and blowing the horn, go out, greet him pleasantly and say, "Please come in for a minute and meet my family." If he refuses, break the date. If he does as you ask, he will probably understand what you are getting at and will come to your door the next time he calls. If he does not, say, "Will you please ring my bell when you call for me? The neighbors are awfully stuffy about kids honking their horns." If he still does not get the idea he's hopeless.
- c) Going on a date with a boy puts you under no obligation to him. He has the power to choose whom he will ask for a date and to determine what the evening's entertainment will be. You have the power to refuse or accept. When you accept, you are doing him a favor. His return for the money he expends on a date is the pleasure of your company for the evening nothing more. Kisses are not doted out to "pay" for a pleasant evening; they are a proof of liking or affection. Any boy who thinks otherwise is a boor.
- d) When a boy first calls you for a date, don't be ashamed to say, "I'll find out if I may go." Well-bred boys understand that a girl must have parental permission to go out with a "new" boy, or to some place where she has never gone before. It is proof that she is cherished and looked after by her family, and quickly puts the relationship on the right plane, as being something open and above-board.
- e) You may also ask a boy where you are going, who with, who is driving, and what time you will leave and arrive home. Your parents have a right to ask these questions and get answers. They also have a right to restrict your hours and the places to which you may go. Whenever you can, tell a boy, when making the date, the hour at which you must be home. Give him a chance to "back out" gracefully, if your hours do not suit him. If he agrees to

your parents' restrictions, he should be prepared to live up to them without complaining. If he actually calls off the date because of them, do not regret it. He is proving himself selfish, self-centered, socially inept and not much attracted to you.

- f) It is the girl who sets the "tone" for the relationship between herself and her escort. It is really true that people usually treat one as one expects to be treated. If a girl is friendly, amiable, and well-bred, she will be treated like the lady she is. If she is boisterous, overly-familiar and vulgar in speech, her escort will still treat her as she seems to expect to be treated. It is up to you.

Of course, there are exceptions. Every girl will sometimes have the experience of finding herself on a first date with a boy who is simply not her sort. Disregarding all her signs of displeasure, he is familiar, crude, tells off-color stories. What to do? If possible: be sick, have a sudden headache, and insist on going home immediately. If circumstances make this impossible, be steadily colder and more reserved. Don't laugh at his stries, do not try to ignore his behavior or cajole him into behaving properly. If he is still impossible, say, "I think we have both made a mistake. I am not the sort of girl you thought I was when you asked me to go out. IF this behavior of yours is any sample, you are not the kind of boy I thought you were when I accepted the date. I am ready to go home whenever you are willing to take me (341f).

- g) Never lower your own standards of conduct to conform with those of your escort or the group you are in. You will never be happy in so doing, and at the worst may involve yourself in a situation which you may regret for the rest of your life. Don't do things you know are wrong. Don't go places where you should not be. Don't associate with bad companions (342).
- h) Help makes dates successful. Try to enjoy and show you enjoy the entertainment offer you, no matter how elaborate or simple. Don't constantly apologize if you are a poor swimmer or golfer ask your partner for tips and admire his skill. Don't criticize food or service anyplace or infer that you are used to much finer places. Don't hang back or fail to take part in any games or amusements as best you can, unless they are improper. Don't monopolize the conversation. Draw your escort out if you can. Don't strive to appear sophisticated if you are not. Don't talk about imaginary trips and engagements...
- i) Don't break dates for a whim. Emergencies do arise; we are all ill occasionally, so sometimes a date must be broken and, if for a legitimate reason, it should create no ill-feeling. But never make a date you do not intend to keep or break one without cause.
- j) Don't telephone a boy without reason, unless you date frequently and he has asked you to do so. Otherwise, call only to invite him to something: a dance at your school, a party you or a friend are giving, or a club party.
- k) Avoid the appearance of being the aggressor in any dealings with boys. The pursued always has the advantage over the pursuer. You may ask a boy who has never taken you out to a party or dance once. If he does not return the compliment, don't ask him again, no matter how much fun the first date was... (342).

- l) Be realistic in deciding whether or not a boy likes you. Suppose he accepts an invitation from you when you ask him, talks pleasantly with you whenever he sees you, but never asks you for a date. Face the facts. He is not really interested. When corresponding with a boy, write once. Never write again unless he answers your letter. Boys do not neglect to write because they are “too busy.” They are just not interested. Don’t center your affections and your dreams around someone who is not attracted to you. Look about you for a new interest.
- m) Promise yourself that no boy will ever be injured by association with you. Never intentionally dress or behave so as to inflame his passions. Never permit intimacies such as to impose too great a strain upon his self-control. The better you like a boy, the greater your responsibility in this matter. (343)

Parents, one word of advice: please, never, *never*, permit your child to drink anything from a bottle, once he is weaned! It is very bad manners, always and under all circumstance. Even in advertisements for soft drinks, one never sees any actually drinking from a bottle — only holding it. This is because the act of drinking from a bottle is one of the most ungraceful and unattractive sights imaginable. There is no way to do it acceptably. Use a glass always. And remember, the prettier the glass, the better will be the manners of the user. But even a paper cup is better than drinking from a bottle (344).

#### **ENLARGING SOCIAL GRACES**

A thoughtful person feels regret when he sees young people full of health, energy, and intelligence, lounging in a tavern, dawdling for hours before a television screen, or racing about recklessly in cars. The malicious mischief and senseless destruction to which some resort for “fun” terrifies us all. Too few of us stop to think that teen-agers may resort to such amusements because they have not been taught how otherwise to enjoy themselves. Young people are eager to excel, or at least to be as good as their contemporaries, in all that they do. They are reluctant to attempt any activity at which they, as beginners, appear awkward and inexpert, and this may be why they fall back on the behavior just described, which requires no practice or preparation (358).

Hence it is more important than one may think to help our teen-agers learn how to do well the wholesome and pleasurable pastimes which can be substituted for less innocent ones. See to it that your children learn how to dance really well, to play bridge, canasta, and other card games, to swim, skate, ski, bowl, play golf or tennis — whatever sports their friends enjoy. Bright teen-agers will also enjoy astronomy, chemical experimentation, photography, painting, wood-working, sewing, or cooking. Be alert to signs of these interests and encourage them. The more they are immersed in worthwhile interests, the less attraction the dangerous ones will have. The more interests you can create for them at this age, the fuller and richer their



adult life will be. Many a man's lifetime career has sprung from a childhood hobby. In any event, reasonable adequacy in the social skills of his group increases a teen-ager's confidence in himself and his ability to move gracefully in the social sphere.

### STEADY DATING

...dating has a four-fold purpose.

- a) To increase acquaintance among members of the opposite sex.
- b) To test the ability to know, understand, and evaluate the worth of members of the opposite sex.
- c) To provide each with a partner for the social life of his group, in which all, like the animals in the ark, must go two by two on every occasion.
- d) To find the ideal marriage partner (359).

Since World War II, another concept has arisen among (young people). Teen-agers seem to ignore the first two purposes and to regard three and four as synonymous; that is, the first dating partner with whom he can pleasurably socialize, he clings to and regards, very quickly, as an ideal marriage mate. This he does without giving himself opportunity to know and compare other possible partners or to allow himself sufficient time to acquire any maturity of judgment. This is the crux of the modern dating problem (359)

This attitude, which results so frequently in early and unsuitable marriages, is disturbing to all thoughtful people. The resultant high divorce rate, with its concomitant of broken homes and parentless children, is a social and economic waste no society can afford, to say nothing of the personal disillusionment and heartache involved (359).

In the case of such a Catholic marriage failing, there is the chance of worse harm resulting; one of the partners, wearing of his lonely life, may turn his back on his Faith and "remarry" outside the Church. Adults know all this. Young people will not and cannot believe it. The fact that they cannot is one proof of their immaturity (360).

There is no quick and easy formula for solving this problem. The following suggestions help to avoid creating it. They are intended to apply, like all the material in this chapter, to young people sixteen and older.

- a) Limit the amount of time spent dating. During the school year, dating should be limited to the weekends...Encourage group activity in preference to single dating. Discourage after-school "twosing": playing records at home in the afternoon, driving about together. There is nothing wrong with such behavior, except that it throws the young people involved too frequently together, makes them too dependent upon one another, too absorbed in each other.

- b) Encourage your teen-ager to spend time with friends of his own sex. In addition to its other benefits, pursuing such friendships prevents him from relying on dating for all his pleasures.
- c) Do what you can to help your teen-ager make new friends and enlarge his acquaintance with the opposite sex...(360f).
- d) Treat his infatuations lightly, particularly his first ones, and the early stages of all of them. Assume that one of the pleasures of his youth, of which he will not wish to be deprived, is to test his power to attract many dating partners. Remind him that the girls he admired at fourteen are not now the ones that please him. Suggest that, although his judgment at sixteen is, or course, much better, even the girls he now likes may not be the ones whose company he will enjoy when he is twenty-one.
- e) Encourage your teen-ager's interests which do not depend upon dating: sports, music, dramatics, social work, civic activity, a part-time job.
- f) Boys and girls planning to attend college should be repeatedly urged to avoid any serious interest in their high school friends. To become so involved often results in a decision not to attend college, or it sends them away to school only half a person, unable to concentrate on their studies or to enjoy the new friends and new experiences they will encounter.
- g) Boys and girls who do not go to college often find their life partners among those they begin to date in their last high school years. (Parents) should also discuss with their children the qualities one should seek in a helpmate...(361f).
- h) Remind your sons that one of the proofs of "real" love is the feeling of protectiveness it engenders toward the loved one. It is this desire to protect the loved one that enables a decent man never to demean or injure his beloved.
- i) Tell your daughters that the essence of feminine love is the desire to give anything the loved one wants. But when the loved on desires what would injure him by causing him to sin, the greatest proof of *her* love is the power to withhold from him the gratification which would deface his immortal soul (362).

### **A Word to Girls**

It is only in the last thirty years that our social code has considered drinking, in any amount, as acceptable behavior for unmarried young women. Even now the world expects young women to exercise more judgment and restraint than it requires of their brothers. A man may occasionally overstep his limits without suffering social ostracism, but a girl may not. Immoderate drinking adversely affects a girl's social life, reputation, and chances for married happiness. It may also induce her to behave as she would never dream of doing if she were in possession of her faculties.

Because of this, it is the writer's personal conviction (but only that) that a girl should not drink at all until she is over twenty-one or a married woman with a husband to protect her. This is really the easy way out a protection against a host of dangers that may assail her even when

drinking moderately. No sensible person disapproves of a girl's abstaining from drinking. Many do disapprove of a girl's drinking, no matter how moderately. A glass of ginger ale is just as refreshing as a highball (it even looks the same) and contains no hidden dangers. Why not stick with it? ...Never drink unless you know your escort, and know him to be a gentleman.

#### **ENGAGEMENT AND PRE-NUPTIAL ENTERTAINING**

An engagement is a promise to marry at some future date, mutually given by the two contracting parties. ...Historically...the Church has recognized engagements when they take the form of a formal espousal signed by the two parties and witnessed by their pastor or two lay witnesses. ...It should be made freely, without reservations, and neither contracting party should have been subject to pressure, fear or duress. It may be terminated at any time proper to marriage by mutual consent (87).

It should be preceded by a time of courtship in which the young couple learn to know one another and, if possible, become acquainted with one another's families. It should not be entered into quickly or lightly, nor with mental reservations. It should not be agreed to unless the parties concerned can marry a year or so after becoming engaged. It should not be so brief as to fail to accomplish its purpose, which is to allow the young people to know one another well enough so as to be sure they truly wish to marry (87f).

Now, above all, is the time for honesty. A girl who says she "adores" children when she really "hates the little brats" is deceiving her beloved. A man who says he is anxious to settle down into family living should not plan to continue to golf on Saturday, fish on Sunday, and play poker twice a week. IF possible, learn to know one another's families. Remember that a prospective mother-in-law whom you now dislike may be a preview of your future bride thirty years hence (88).

#### **FIRST DUTIES**

In present-day America..., A young man often proposes and is at least tentatively accepted without either family's being consulted. Thereafter the young people sometimes announce it to their families as a settled thing, without any permission being asked or given.

The more old-fashioned way is the better one. Let the young man tell his family in advance that he intends to propose, and what his marriage plans are. Let him listen to his parents' opinions in the matter, especially if they know the girl. He may not indeed, if he is of age, he need not take their advice, but he should hear it, and try to weigh it dispassionately (88).

After proposing and being accepted, he should then call formally on his fiancée's father and ask his consent to the marriage. He should tell him what his present financial status is, how

he intends to support a wife, and what his future prospects are. He should be able to tell him that there is nothing in his past life unknown to his future wife that could shame or injure her. If he cannot say this, he should confess any past misdeeds at once. Here we are talking of serious things, such as a prison record, the drub habit, etc. (88f).

If he fears that he has any tendency towards alcoholism, he should say so, and tell how he intends to combat the evil. He should be prepared to say that his health is good, or to admit to ill health.

Why should a young man do all this? To his prospective bride's father he is, more often than not, almost a stranger. He is asking that father to commit to a stranger's care a soul whom he helped bring into the world, to whose rearing, education, and nurturing he has devoted the best years of his life, whom he loves with a special feeling unlike any other. To ask his consent in this manly fashion immediately reassures the parent in two ways: it shows that the young man quite properly feels that his fiancé is a treasure whom he cannot snatch away without a by-your-leave, and that he is grateful for the years of devotion her father has lavished upon her. There is nothing a prospective fiancé can do that can create a better impression than this. There is nothing wiser a father can do than to require it (89).

#### **CANONICAL ENGAGEMENT**

A canonical engagement serves a further good purpose: It emphasizes the true purpose of an engagement as a time of serious and thoughtful preparation for the responsibilities and joys of marriage. It helps arm the young couple against sins against chastity and purity which tempt the best of us so powerfully and so attractively at this time in our lives. ...there is no obligation on any Catholic to make his engagement a canonical one (89f).

If a couple wish to have a canonical engagement, they should plan for it some time before the formal announcement of their engagement, to allow time for a visit with their pastor and for the ceremony itself. This should precede the engagement announcement (92).

#### **ANNOUNCING THE ENGAGEMENT**

The public is informed of an engagement through an announcement sent to the local papers. ...A photograph of the bride-to-be may be furnished if requested. Some sample forms:

Mrs. George Thatcher Price, 117 Aspinwall Road, announces the engagement of her daughter, Miss Monica Lynn Price, to Mr. William Walter Sims, son of Fr. and Mrs. Walter Douglas Sims, of Rochester. Miss Price is the daughter of the late George Thatcher Price, and the granddaughter of Admiral Carl Chase and the late Mrs. Chase. She was graduated from Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart in the class of 1959.

Mr. Sims was graduated from Cranwell Preparatory School, and is a student at Georgetown University.

The marriage will take place in October. (94).

In small communities, among unworldly people, no formal announcement of an engagement need be made. The bride-to-be simply wears her ring and shows it to friends. Otherwise the engaged girl first wears her ring publicly on the occasion of her announcement party, or after the newspaper announcement has appeared (96).

#### **ENGAGEMENT PARTIES**

Most people announce an engagement through the notice sent to the newspapers. Nothing further is required. Many, however, like to make the announcement to friends at a party. For such a party, the hosts are the girl's parents. No one else may properly give such a party unless the girl is an orphan, in which case another relative, such as grandparents or older brother, may give it for her. If she has no living relatives, the couple themselves may give the party. No one else may properly act as host at such an occasion (97).

The type of party selected depends somewhat on whom one intends to invite. If it is limited to relatives, a dinner is often chosen. If it is to be an intimate daytime affair to which only the bride's young women friends are to be bid, a luncheon is the choice. If it is to be a large group of both sexes, a late afternoon or early evening reception is best. Such a party in the afternoon may also be a tea (97).

There is one type of engagement entertaining which is in every respect unsuitable. This is a large evening party to which young men and women friends of the couple are invited. They are told in advance by a friend of the pair that it is to be an engagement party, and that they are to bring gifts. *This is wrong.* No gifts are required or expected of anyone on the occasion of an engagement announcement. None should be brought to such a party, as the announcement presumably is a surprise (97).

#### **FORM OF ANNOUNCEMENT**

Some years ago it was customary to look for elaborate ways to announce the engagement at engagement parties. Today the usual method is a toast by the bride's father. At all-women's luncheon, the bride's mother makes the toast, which merely announces the engagement and expresses the family's pleasure in it. Something like this is sufficient:

Dear friends: I am very happy to tell you that this little gathering is to announce the engagement of my beloved daughter, Mary Rose, to Mr. Arthur Troxel. I am sure you will all

agree with me that they seem ideally suited to one another. I ask you now to join with me in pledging them LONG LIFE AND HAPPINESS. (Raises glass and all toast the couple.)

No one is obliged to give a present when an engagement is announced. If the announcement is made at a party, the man's parents sometimes send flowers for the occasion, either a corsage for the girl to wear or a handsome floral arrangement to use as decoration (98).

### **SHOWERS**

After the engagement announcement and prior to the wedding, it is a custom to entertain for the prospective bride with showers. These are afternoon or evening parties at which the hostess is one of the bride's most intimate friends and the guests are women friends of her own age. Each guest brings a present, either something for the bride's trousseau or for her future home (101).

Traditionally, showers are feminine affairs. Occasionally one hears of parties called "showers" to which both sexes are invited, and to which all bring presents. Avoid this (102).

### **WEDDING INVITATIONS**

There is no detail of a wedding more strictly bound by custom and usage than the wedding invitation. Clear and precise rules for every detail concerning it have been laid down and observed for generation; the bride who attempts to deviate from them labels herself as socially inept (107).

#### **The Senders**

Wedding invitations are issued in the name of the bride's parents, if they are living. If she is wholly orphaned, they may be issued in the name of any relative—grandparents, brother, sister, uncle, etc.—who is standing in loco parentis for her on this occasion. If she has no relatives to act for her, the invitations may be sent in her own name.

Invitations are sent three weeks before the date of the wedding. They should be ordered far enough in advance so that they will be delivered to the bride at least six weeks before the ceremony, to allow time for addressing them. (108).

The size of the guest list depends upon the elaborateness of the wedding and the entertaining to follow and upon whether the invitation invites to the wedding and to the reception or to the wedding only, with reception cards enclosed to those who are invited to the nuptial entertaining.

The bride's mother is responsible for making the list of all relatives and friends of the bride. The bridegroom's mother is similarly responsible for the relatives and friends of the bridegroom (108).

A formal wedding invitation is, ideally, always engraved. This is a process in which a copper plate is inscribed with the message and reproductions are made from it, which causes the lettering to stand out from the surface of the paper. ...When cost is a factor, the bride may consider substituting embossing for engraving. ...Straight printing may never be used. ...Invitations are always inscribed in black ink. Gold or silver is not correct (109).

The bride has a choice in the matter of type face. Script is considered the most formal, traditionally, and is now extremely fashionable also. There are a number of script styles (109).

The traditional wording and spacing for a wedding invitation is as follows:

*Mr and Mrs. John Lester Sullivan*  
*request the honour of your presence*  
*at the marriage of the daughter*  
*Joan Louise*  
*to*  
*Mr. Vincent Paul McGinty*  
*on Monday, the fifth of June*  
*one thousand nine hundred and sixty*  
*at ten o'clock*  
*St. Ignatius Church*  
*South Bend, Indiana*

#### **THE BACHELOR DINNER**

Traditionally, the bridegroom-to-be is host for the bachelor dinner. This is usually held on the weekend prior to the wedding. Catholics never hold this party on the night before the wedding, as this time is reserved for the rehearsal. It may be given at a club, at home, or in a hotel (102).

The guests are the best man and the ushers. The man's father and future father-in-law may be invited, as well as brothers and cousins not in the wedding party, if the host wishes to do so. But he is obligated only to ask his wedding attendants. At this party the host presents his groomsmen with his wedding remembrance gifts to them. They are usually jewelry, such as handsome cuff links, a lighter, eetc. His gift to his best man is always more valuable than those

he gives his ushers. He may also give them their wedding ties and gloves, which are always a present from the bridegroom, but it might be a wise precaution to wait until the rehearsal to do this. At this party also, the ushers present the host with the wedding present for him and his bride which they have jointly purchased (102f).

### **THE REHEARSAL DINNER**

Even the simplest Catholic wedding requires a rehearsal. ...The rehearsal is usually followed by a dinner or party at the home of the bride. It may, of course, be formal, if that accords with the style of living of the bride's parents and they wish to have it so. Practically, it is the worst possible time for the bride's family to attempt to give an elaborate party. ...And yet, this is a party that should not be given in a club or hotel.

If the party is held at the bride's home, it is usually a simple one, either a buffet supper or a cocktail party at which hors d'oeuvres are substantial and plentiful. No one is invited but the members of the wedding party; it is over at an early hour out of consideration for the stresses of the day to come.

A newer and surely a better idea is to relieve the bride's mother of this entertaining. Custom decrees that the parents of the bridegroom shall be guests, and only guests, at the wedding of their son and the entertaining to follow. They can bear none of the expense and express no opinions as to its nature, however it may clash with their ideas as to what is suitable. ...If therefore, they live in the city in which the wedding is being held, the parents of the bridegroom may properly offer to hold the rehearsal party in their home. It is a charming gesture so to offer, and one which will be appreciated; it gives them a share which they are usually longing to have in the wedding excitement and fun, without being burdensome to them (104f).

Today it is usually at this party that the bride gives her attendants their wedding remembrance gifts, and the bridegroom may give his attendants theirs if he wishes to (105).

### **WEDDING COSTUMES**

#### **Bride**

White or ivory are the traditional colors. ...She wears a veil the exact shade of her gown... usually it is attached to a small crown, tiara or headband (Caps and fresh flowers may...hold the veil on the head...). The bride carries a bouquet of white flowers or a white prayer book. One may have a small bouquet, such as a single large white orchid, attached to a white prayer book. A Catholic bride always wears long or bracelet-length sleeves. She never wears a low-backed gown or one with an extreme décolletage (164).



## **Bridesmaids**

Bridesmaids' gowns, head covering and slippers are always identical in style. ...The dresses should not be low-backed or very low-necked, and they should have a sleeve of sorts. IF the sleeve is a mere shoulder cap, they should wear opera-length gloves. Shoes match the dresses in color (164f).

## **Bridegroom**

...the bridegroom wears formal morning attire, the only correct costume for the hours at which Catholic weddings are held. Dinner jackets or evening clothes are not proper, as is now generally understood. The traditional wear for me at a formal daytime wedding consists of: cutaway coat in black or oxford gray wool, waistcoat which matches cutaway or is made of pearl gray gabardine, trousers of gray andn black or white and black strip, without cuffs, starched white shirt with plain bosoms, stiff cuffs, and fold collar, tie, plain black shoes and socks, and a boutonniere of white flowers, such as a carnation or a sprig of lilies of the valley. Winged collars, yellow s=waistcoats, and spats are proper... To and from the church, the groom should wear a silk hat or opera hat and carry a walking stick.

## **Best Man**

...wears exactly what the bridegroom wears.

### **NUPTIAL ENTERTAINING**

## **The Receiving Line**

The correct position for those in a receiving line is always the same, whatever the size of the reception. Just inside the door of the room where guests are to be received, and to the guests' right as they enter, stands the bride's mother, with the bridegroom's mother on her right. She greets all arriving guests and introduces to the bridegroom's mother such of them as are not known to her. Some distance away stand the members of the receiving line...They stand as follows: half the bridesmaids, whatever their number; on their left, the maid of honor; on her left, the bride, then the bridegroom, then the flower girl (if there is one), followed by the rest of the bridesmaids. The best man, ushers, and both fathers are not part of the receiving line.

## **Saying Grace**

A seated breakfast or luncheon always begins with saying grace. If a priest is present, he is asked to say grace. If more than one priest is present, one may ask the Mass celebrant, the oldest man, or whomever one wishes to honor; but bear in mind that it is an honor, and in honoring one, be sure you are slighting another. ...If a bishop is present, he is always asked. If two clergymen are present, it is well to ask one to say grace, the other to offer a blessing on the assemblage at the end of the meal.

## **Toasts**

At all wedding receptions, it is the privilege of the best man to offer the first toast, and it is always “The Bride!” He should be forewarned, so that he may be prepared with a graceful little speech. Other toasts may follow or not, as the host wishes, but this first one is never omitted (208).

## **The Wedding Cake**

The traditional wedding cake is a rich dark fruit cake with a white icing. In the South, a bride’s cake which is all-white is served instead; this bride’s cake is now becoming popular in all sections of the country because it is not so rich (209).

## **Cutting the Cake**

The wedding cake is cut when the dessert is served, and is a little ceremony. The bride cuts the first slice, with the bridegroom’s hand resting on the knife handle also, and the bride offers the first piece to the bridegroom. He serves her the second piece (209).

## **Going Away**

Sometime during the afternoon, at whatever hour suits their plans, the bride and bridegroom slip away and change their wedding costumes for traveling clothes. While they are doing so, both sets of parents leave the guests for a short time, to say their private good-byes to their children. Usually first the mothers, then the fathers, slip away, so that hosts or hostesses are always with their guests. ...The bridal couple usually “run the gauntlet” of their friends, to be pelted with rose leaves and confetti, and drive away (210).

### **BAPTISM:**

A healthy child should be baptized during the first two weeks of his life. ...It should not be delayed except for grave reasons and with the consultation of the pastor. A child should be baptized in his own parish church except under unusual circumstances (p. 3).

## **Naming the Baby**

The Church desires that the name of a saint be given a child in baptism in order that the child may imitate his virtues and have him for a protector and intercessor in Heaven. ...It is well to teach him to ask for his namesake’s intercession in time of trouble or need. ...Parents should give consideration to the fact that a name is perhaps one’s most intimate possession, and that its suitability, or lack of it, is believed to exercise a profound influence upon the child (6).

## **Baptismal Robe**

It is traditional for infants of both sexes to wear baptismal robes, usually long-skirted and lavishly trimmed with embroidery or lace. This is the one time when a baby may be so dressed

without violating the canons of good taste. Coat and bonnet should be removed for the ceremony, and the neck of the robe should be unbuttoned, so that the priest may easily anoint the breast and the back of the baby (10).

## **Guests**

It is necessary only for the godparents and the father of the child to attend the baptismal ceremony. The mother may go if she feels well enough. Grandparents and other close relatives may attend if they wish...(10).

## **Attire of Guests**

Guests at the baptismal ceremony or the party that follows it wear the same kind of clothes that they would wear to High Mass (11).

## **Photographs**

On this, as on all churchly occasions, the photographer should do his work as inconspicuously as possible, and should be dressed as the guests are (11).

## **The Christening Party**

There is no social precedent that requires entertaining following a baptismal ceremony. Often the young mother does not feel strong enough to attempt to entertain (11). A traditional christening party is basically simple. The parents of the child invite to their home, directly after the ceremony, the officiating priest and the godparents. They may add any others they care to include. ...The priest is seldom free at such a time to accept the invitation, but it must always be proffered to him. ...To the guests the parents serve a small white cake, iced like a bridal cake, called a baby cake, and champagne or champagne punch to toast the health of the little new Christian. This is all that is required, and if kept to this minimum, it is really not much trouble or expense. If one wishes, one may celebrate far more elaborately. In addition to, or in place of the baby cake, many people serve the type of food offered at cocktail parties. (12). ...the service of intoxicants is held to a strict minimum; usually the champagne toasts are served with or after dessert (13).

## **Baptismal Gifts**

Godparents always give their godchild a baptismal gift. If the sponsors are a married pair, they may give one present, but it should be of more value than one of the gifts when two are given. If the sponsors are not a married couple, each gives a gift. The traditional ones are a silver mug and a silver porringer. A silver knife, fork, and spoon in a child's size is also a popular gift. One may of course give anything one wishes; ...less expensive ones which are suitable for the occasion are: gold baby pins, gold or sterling silver religious medals, a statue of the Blessed Mother or the Infant Jesus, a crucifix, a baptismal bonnet, a baby blanket or a carriage robe. ...

More valuable presents might be: ...the baptismal robes, the start of a pearl necklace, a savings account in which a substantial deposit has been made, stocks or bonds, or an endowment insurance policy. No one save the godparents is obligated to give the child a present at the time of baptism, but godparents usually do and so do grandparents. If they gave the baby a valuable present at birth, the baptismal gift may be a trifle. But many Catholic grandparents wait until the baptismal day to give their present, and then it is something substantial (13).