

**Questions of Catholics Answered  
PERTAINING TO COURTSHIP**

By

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**PERTAINING TO COURTSHIP**

**Is it a sin to keep company with a man without any intention to marriage?**

We give a number of guiding principles, repeating one for the sake of emphasis:

1). Young people should not be in too great a hurry to start regular company-keeping. Begun too early and unduly protracted, courtship is fraught with great dangers to the innocence and virtue of the parties concerned and not seldom ends in a non-marriage and consequent unhappiness and hard feelings.

2). Without any intention of marriage regular company-keeping is quite senseless, always out of place, usually wrong, and often sinful.

3). But young people in their later teens need not avoid all society and company of the opposite sex. A wise and well supervised mingling of the sexes in a social way is helpful to both—decidedly and variously so. But it is one thing for boys and girls to meet in wholesome and prudently chaperoned frolic and pastime, and another thing for a boy and a girl to yield, wittingly or unwittingly, to a sexual attraction for each other, and start an actual courtship, formally or informally. Marriage is a full-grown man's and woman's job; and courtship is a preliminary to marriage and should be properly conducted by those who are old enough and sensible enough and virtuous enough to know what they are doing and how to do it.

4). Hence we repeat that company-keeping, or courtship, is permissible only when there is at least a possibility and some prospect of a marriage ensuing between the partners of the courtship. When marriage is out of question entirely, company-keeping is an unjustifiable exposure of oneself to moral dangers, and consequently reprehensible and forbidden in every instance. When marriage is excluded it is not in keeping with the standard of Christian virtue and decency for a young man and a young lady "to go together" merely for the sake of company in social diversion and pleasure.

5). Once or again for a girl to be honorably escorted to a party or a theatre by a young man does not fall under the caption of company-keeping, and is of itself not wrong. But even this should not be of frequent occurrence with the same person when there is no thought of marriage between them. Near relatives who know that they cannot or will never be married have no privileges in this matter. Only too often, under the cover of relationship, they are beguiled into lewd and incestuous thoughts, desires, and practices.

6). You may not keep company with a person who is married to another or what amounts to the same thing, a divorced person. This is self-evident but not always observed to the unspeakable ruination of many.

**Is company-keeping wrong? If so, how is it that so many Catholic boys and girls indulge in this pastime?**

What is company-keeping? It is association between young men and young women who contemplate entering the state of Holy Matrimony and who wish to learn each other's character and to ascertain whether they will make suitable partners for life. As such it is quite lawful, of course; but even as such it should not be protracted too long, because of the grave dangers of sin that easily spring up in this familiar association. Six months, or, at most, a year, is considered a sufficiently long time.

But unnecessary company-keeping, that is, between those who have not the intention of marrying or who are too young to think of marriage, is wrong. To repeat, company-keeping just for the fun of it, for the pleasure that is in it, is sinful. For, in view of the facts that human nature, weakened by original sin, is exceedingly prone to the sin of impurity, and that this proneness is exceedingly strong in the years of youth when the passions are developing, we say that, in view of these facts, unnecessary company-keeping is a willful near occasion of mortal sin.

We are well aware that many Catholic boys and girls do indulge in this pastime, as you call it. But because others willfully get too near the chained dog that is the devil is no reason why you should do so.

This may seem severe; but it is not a fraction as severe as Our Lord's doctrine about avoiding the occasions of sin. He says, "And if they eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished. For every one shall be salted with fire." (Mark 5:46-48.)

In other words, to apply this passage to the matter under discussion, even if keeping away from a certain person that is a proximate occasion of mortal sin to you should be as hard and painful as tearing out your eye would be, you must make the sacrifice in order not to incur the risk of being condemned to suffer the eternal pains of hell.

### **How about kissing? Will you kindly explain why it is so dangerous and all that?**

A woman has written this article on a subject that is of interest to young men as well as to young women, and it is so sensible, so clear, so instructive, that it deserves to be widely circulated:

I get a great many letters from young girls who want to know what they shall do about the kissing proposition. They say that it is practically a case of no kiss, no beau, for the young men who take them about demand a good-night kiss as pay for their courtesies, and if they refuse it is, indeed, good-night, in the slang phrase, for they never see these osculatory youths again.

Now the innate modesty and delicacy of those girls revolt at yielding their lips to men to whom they are not even engaged; to men who do not even pretend to be in love with them. It violates their sense of what is proper, but, at the same time, they do not want to be regarded as pruders or Puritans. Still less do they desire to be wall flowers left out of all the fun and parties, and numbered with those forlorn damsels who never have any attention from men.

So the girl is torn between her instinctive sense of what is right and her knowledge of expediency, and she wants to know what she shall do and how she shall answer the eternal argument of man when he is trying to persuade a woman into doing the thing that he knows she should not do. To kiss or not to kiss, that is the question that troubles her.

There can be but one answer to give a girl to this problem. It is no, no, no! A maiden's lips should be kept inviolate, and the first man's kiss that is pressed upon them should be the kiss of love from the man she expects to marry. For a girl to give her lips to every Tom, Dick and Harry who takes her to a moving picture show or escorts her home from a dance is something unthinkable. It is as much of a desecration as if she trailed a white rosebud through a sewer.

It is a pity that girls can never be made to realize that the most alluring and attractive thing about them is the aura of innocence and unsophistication that surrounds them. It is the whiteness, the untrodden snowiness of their souls that is their chief charm, and they never make so fatal a mistake as when they throw this away.

If girls were only wise enough to realize how fascinating aloofness is, and what an appeal unsullied purity makes to the masculine imagination, they would keep every man at arm's length at least until he had come out and popped the question. They would not think for a minute of putting up with cheap familiarities from men that rob them of their freshness and make them little shop-worn bits of humanity that have been pawed over like the goods on a bargain table. Girls should never forget that it is the shy and shrinking violet that is man's favorite flower, not the brazen sunflower.

My girl correspondent says that she does not know how to answer a man when he begs her to kiss him and tells her that there is no harm in it, and that his arguments make her feel foolish because she seems to be making a great ado over a very little matter. There is one answer that every girl can make to a man's request for a kiss. She can ask him if he would like his sister to kiss any man good-night who happened to call on her. She can ask him what he would advise his sister to do if his sister were in her place. And she can ask him if he would like to think that the girl that he is going to marry some day had kissed a hundred men who were mere casual acquaintances.

Such questions will make any decent man writhe. A man will tell his own sister quickly enough what he thinks on the subject, and his own lips would grow cold and stiff on his sweetheart's if he remembered that her soft young mouth had belonged to a long procession of men before him.

Girls can never bear in mind too constantly the fact that men never play fair with women, and are never just or logical in judging them. A man will spend hours, days and months persuading a girl to do something that is wrong, and have a contempt for her ever afterwards for yielding to him. He will argue down her every instinct and scruple and principle against kissing him, and the minute she does he will lose his reverence for her as for something utterly fine and delicate. It has been his hand that has brushed the dew off the bud, but, none the less, it is henceforth a shattered rose for him.

Girls should also bear in mind that a wedding ring on the hand is worth a peck of them in the dim distance, and that the girls who have the most beaux generally get the fewest and the poorest makeshifts of husbands. A girl observes that those girls who are free and easy in their manners, who exact no sort of respect from men and permit them to indulge in familiarities with them, girls who drink and smoke with men, and listen to and tell off-colored stories, girls who are good sports, are what we call popular, and are generally surrounded by a horde of men. Especially while they are young and good looking, and full of high spirits.

But what the girl does not notice is that this type of young girl very seldom marries, and when she does she almost invariably marries a crooked stick who was not worth picking up. The fast girl, the girl without modesty or delicate womanly reserve, may be the kind of a girl that men like to play with, but she is not the sort of woman that they want for a wife and for the mother of their children.

That is why you are so often surprised at the marriages that men make. Men whom you have known of as gay rounders bob up with a wife who is a Sunday school teacher. Men who have been noted as chorus girl chasers go to some country village and marry girls who never saw a brighter lamp than a kerosene lamp. They do not want the lips on which a thousand kisses have rained. They want the lips that have never been kissed at all.

And do not be misled, girls, into making the mistake of believing that because a man asks you to kiss him it is any indication of his being in love with you. A kiss is no guarantee of affection. Judas betrayed his Lord with a kiss, and every black-hearted traitor of a man who ever betrayed the faith of an innocent and trusting young girl began his devil's work in the same way with a kiss.

The primrose path that leads to perdition for women is paved with the kisses of men. The thing that no money could have hired them to do, that no arguments could have persuaded them to do, they have been kissed into doing. For it is no flight of the poet's fancy when he speaks about women being made drunk on kisses. It is a literal fact, and that is why no girl is safe who permits men to kiss her.

**Can a girl be too strict as regards kisses, caresses, and other familiarities with the young men she is keeping company with? Are long courtships forbidden?**

First of all, here is a big, general rule for company keeping. Such things as holding one another's hands, sitting on one another's lap, kissing, caressing, fondling, embracing, and other familiarities, are very dangerous. Such actions work slyly though directly on the nerves of the body and render them morbidly sensitive; they arouse emotions and passions that are anything but proper, but waken and stimulate thoughts, instincts, feelings, desires and, but too often, even actions that are positively indecent. It is a clear case of leading oneself into serious temptations, which frequently end in a fall. That is why these things are usually sinful, that is why there is no truth in the assertion that: "There is no harm in it." Now, that is the big, general rule.

That is why it is clear that no girl can be too strict in these things. If a young man is dissatisfied with the maidenly modesty and prudence of a good girl and insists upon tokens of affection of the kind mentioned above and will break off his friendship if he does not get them, then simply let him go. The true Christian gentleman will admire and love a girl all the more for her firm stand in matters of modesty. And such a one will be an ideal husband. It is perfectly right for you to be very strict. May God bless such girls! They are truly wise.

However, we would make a little exception. If a couple are engaged to be married, some modest familiarities are allowed. For them a gentle kiss is allowed as a little token of special affection. Also the light embrace you mention, sitting with arms lightly thrown round each other's neck. But nothing more than things like that, and with no intention of forbidden pleasure and no consent should it arise.

Courtships that last for several years are to be condemned as dangerous and improper. But also here there are exceptions. It happens sometimes that with the best will in the world a young man cannot offer a real home to the girl he loves. And it takes years before he is in a position to do so. In such a case, if the young man is a practical Catholic and if he makes no improper advances, they may just wait, not seeing each other too often in the meantime. Here each girl must decide for herself, from the circumstances that she alone knows best.

**When a young man is keeping company with a girl with the intention of marriage, does he do wrong in kissing her? Is it a mortal sin to kiss in a passionate way when keeping company? When is a kiss a sin and when is it not? Will you kindly give your views, from all angles, on this subject of kissing in company keeping?**

When a person asks whether lovers are allowed to kiss one another, that asking at least indicates a certain delicacy of conscience. You seem to want to do the right thing; and for this you are to be commended. We will answer your question briefly, yet clearly.

Lovers who are engaged to be married may exchange respectable marks of affection and love, in a moderate degree. A modest kiss is one such mark of affection. But it must remain modest, and must not become willfully passionate and sensual, and, hence, grievously sinful. It will easily become thus sinful, if repeated often at the same meeting. One friendly and pure goodnight kiss is not dangerous for engaged couples. But it ought to be sufficient. The passionate and lingering kiss, or the so-called soul kiss between lovers, is a mortal sin, because it offers the occasion and inducement to grievous sensual emotions and gratifications.

Relative to the question as to when kissing is sinful and when it is not, it may in general be said that whatever conduct exposes you or your partner to the proximate danger of yielding to impurity in thought, desire, feeling, or action, is a mortal sin. And if you say that passionate kisses do not involve this danger for you or your

companion you are grossly deceiving yourself. Such an assertion makes one think of a dulled conscience and a blinded soul.

Incipient or advanced lovers who are not yet engaged to be married should not at all indulge in kissing and similar demonstrations of intimate and ardent love, since their relations are not close enough to warrant it. If they embark at so early a stage upon these amorous practices, there is every danger that they will proceed from what appears innocent and modest to what they know is not, and the magnitude of the harm and disaster that will ensue to both parties will probably outrun all their calculations.

We believe that the above treats of our subject from all necessary angles and gives principles that will enable you to act rightly in all circumstances that may arise. We add, however, as a serious warning, that, though there may be some who have no evil thoughts or desires whatsoever in kissing, and petting, they may be the occasion of gross sins of immoral thoughts, desires, and emotions to their partners. Remember this safe and simple rule: “Never do anything, when the two of you are alone, which you would be ashamed to do in the presence of your parents; or which you would be ashamed to reveal to your parents.”

### **Is it a sin to give a boy friend a goodnight kiss after you have spent a pleasant evening together?**

That depends upon many things. If it is a pure, modest, friendly, passing kiss and does not give rise in either party to impure thoughts, desires, or feelings that are consented to, it is not a sin. But those who are not yet engaged to be married should not indulge at all in kissing or in similar demonstrations of intimate love. Don't, don't! It is dangerous. Protect yourself and the young man you love by refraining from all undue familiarities. If not sinful now, it may soon become so and lead to harm and disaster that will far outrun all your calculations. Don't! A young man with the proper sense of virtue and honor will always respect his girl friend's concern for her modesty and innocence as manifested in the observance of this important “Don't!” He will love her all the more for it. He will look upon her declining even “a mere kiss” as a convincing sign of her great shyness and fear of being gradually beguiled into the loss of what she considers—and what he also considers—her greatest treasure. Be sure of this: a girl who is easy and ready to lend her lips to anybody who comes along—and has doubtless already done so. No good Catholic gentleman wants such a girl.

### **Is a girl allowed, without sin, to go with a boy to dances, if she does not intend to get married to him?**

Of course, she may go to a dance with him without committing sin, as far as the fact of her going is concerned. But whether it is *advisable* to go with him is another question. Certainly a girl should not go out regularly with any young man if she has no intention of marrying him. Where there is no intention of marriage steady company keeping is never right and is usually wrong and sinful. But going out in a respectable way from time to time with a respectable young man or even different young men to respectable places and wholesome innocent amusements is not wrong. Young people must of course meet and learn to know and appreciate each other's characters before they can love each other.

In our day and country it is hard to be precise in this matter. Our Catholic young people are facing many new and perplexing questions as regards courtship and marriage. One thing, however, in spite of its being so out-of-date and sometimes almost or wholly impossible, is much to be desired, namely, that young people meet and enjoy each other's company at *home*. And one thing a wise and prudent Catholic girl will never do is this: she will never “go out,” *not even once*, with a young man who is not a Catholic.

### **Is it necessary for those who enter the married state to love each other?**

Yes, absolutely, if they wish to be happy. Marriage should never be entered into hastily, but only after mature deliberation and prayer. Those who embrace the married state should realize full well what they are doing. It is not for a few years, until they want a change, as the neopagan world would have it, but until death. They must, accordingly, love each other; and the love must be mutual, not one-sided. They must, however, be *truly* in love with each other; for only that love will enable them to be what they ought to be in the state on which they are

entering. "A loveless marriage," says a learned author, "is a ghastly horror." So be sure, quite sure, that it is love and not some passing emotion, some transitory fascination, or sudden welling up of passion. Be sure that it is true love; and true love is the unchanging direction of heart and will to one single person. True love is something that cannot be mistaken; it is the electric action, so to speak, set up between two, which draws them to unity. The two who are really in love come more and more to see everything through the eyes of each other.

Remember well that it is not enough to love; you must be loved in return. This mutual love must last a lifetime. If you have it, no matter what sufferings may befall you in the future, this love will carry you triumphantly through all. The married life is indeed a life of sacrifice, but it is sacrifice made sweet by love. That is why love is essential to its success. If you have not true and mutual love, all the wealth in the universe cannot make up for its absence.

**I am keeping company with another. We are soon to be married. I used to go with others. Must I tell my partner every detail about my former company-keeping?**

Courtship must, above all, be sincere. The parties to it should be mutually frank and candid in apprising one another of their true status regarding their health, religion, economical condition, freedom from encumbering obligations of a personal or financial nature. (We take for granted that marriage is seriously intended, otherwise regular company-keeping is simply not allowed.) A person who would hide from the partner the fact of a serious secret illness, of a social nature, for instance, or of an important disability referring to sexual life, or of heavy debts clamoring for payment, or of previous convictions in court on criminal charges involving considerable dishonor, or of a breach of promise of marriage to another, entailing possible arraignment in court or other very unpleasant after effects, would be unfair, dishonest, and unjust. It might even happen that, owing to the concealment of a detriment impediment, the subsequent marriage would be invalid, and a serious injury to the innocent party.

But (attention please!) this does not mean that every personal and intimate revelation is mutually required or desirable on the part of lovers. For them, too, before and after marriage, there remains a hallowed domain of personal secrets, the revelation of which is made only to God and His personal representative. This refers to secret individual lapses and sins which are past and, presumably, through a good confession, forgiven and forgotten by God, and which should consequently be forgotten by the perpetrators themselves and never be individually recalled or referred to again. Girls are more prone than men to err in this regard. (Men are wise enough to keep their secrets.) When they are in love some girls grow too confidential and trusting and, to show their lover that they are hiding nothing whatsoever from him, they tell him of their more or less serious transgressions with one or more other men, or even alone. These are most unwise and altogether unnecessary revelations, imprudent confidences, and may lead to a breaking off of courtship or at least a marring of the bliss of the ensuing marriage. Thus, too, some women who are already married are so utterly unwise and foolish as to manifest their sexual transgressions, committed before or after marriage, to their husbands (who are wise enough not to do the like). By these uncalled-for manifestations they jeopardize what marital love and well-being they possess. Some women are so stupid! Sins of a personal nature, without damaging consequences to the other party, are to be revealed only to God and His official delegate for purposes of forgiveness.

**I am a lonely girl working out with very nice people. I am not quite satisfied. I never go out much, and when I go to a show now and then, I always have to go alone. I have no friends, neither girls nor boys. I do not know why, except that they seem to lead a more fast life than I ever care to lead. They seem to snub me because I seem old-fashioned to them. And I have no desire to be a Sister, though I have prayed and prayed. Now, is it true that if I sit at home every day and never go out the right young man will come to me just the same? Is it true that there is a partner for everyone? Must I go half way in finding a good Catholic boy? Is it right to pray for a good Catholic husband?**

One often hears it said nowadays, by those who know, that marriage "is not such an easy job" as some people seem to think. It is full of hardships and disappointments, burdens and responsibilities. In the light of such assertions, it ought not to be difficult for a girl to reconcile herself with that state of life which the Church calls

single blessedness in the world, if that state seems to be the holy will of God for her. After all, a good Catholic life, a life of virtue and holiness and prayer is the best thing in the world, no matter in which state it is lived.

If you sit at home and never go out it is quite probable that the right young man will never come along. A girl who wishes to enter the married state must ordinarily, to some extent at least, associate with others in an honorable way; without, however, in any way paying the dreadful price of impropriety in order to do so. In this sense a girl must indeed go half way in finding a good Catholic boy, always with modesty that attracts more than anything else.

It is, of course, not true that there is a destined partner for everyone. Many God calls to His special service in a life of consecrated virginity. Many more live a single life in the world. Either out of personal preference, from selfish or unselfish motives, as the case may be, or out of simple necessity. In the latter case, it is but wise to make a virtue of necessity, to offer one's virginity to God, and to devote oneself to some useful career for God and the good of human society.

It is quite right and most praiseworthy to pray for a good Catholic husband; and it were to be wished that more girls would thus pray and consult and, in general, proceed wisely in a matter as highly important as marriage. Marriage means much more for a woman than it does for a man. In the life of the Little Flower's mother we read that, after she had been told by spiritual advisers that it was not her vocation to become a Sister, she turned her thoughts towards holy matrimony and constantly prayed to God that He would send her not only a *good*, but a *fervent* Catholic husband. And God answered her prayer.

Keep the golden means. Do not be a frivolous gadabout, like so many of our girls, and do not be a recluse either. But if you must do either the one or the other, then choose to be more a home girl than anything else. And just quietly pray, trusting that, if it be for your good and for His glory, God will in due time provide.

**I am keeping company with a young man who becomes intoxicated from time to time. I told him if he does that I will not keep company with him any longer. He never promised me he would not drink any more and yet he does not want to break up our company-keeping. What shall I do?**

Dismiss him for good. Have nothing more to do with him. Marriage is not a reformatory, and he will be worse afterwards than before. The life a drunkard's wife is one of untold misery. It is a hideous nightmare. A young woman should study the man who offers her attentions. She should study him more carefully than any other matter in life, remembering that there is more camouflage in courtship than in anything else, not even excepting war. When a girl has found, as you surely have, that a man is undesirable she should absolutely and resolutely discontinue to accept his attentions. If all girls would follow this rule we would not hear so many married women exclaim; "Oh if I had only known him. I never would have married him!" All of which advice, with the necessary changes, may also be given to young men.

**Is it wrong for a Catholic party to keep steady company with a non-Catholic?**

Yes; it is wrong. Canon 1060 of the Church law says; "The Church most strictly forbids mixed marriages everywhere." And if explicitly she "most strictly forbids mixed marriages", she implicitly forbids courtship between Catholics and non-Catholics. Such courtship on the part of a Catholic is the willful and unwarranted exposure of self to the loss of the faith; and, since the Catholic faith is divine, any such exposure of it to the danger of loss is forbidden by divine and, we may add, by the natural law, which latter commands us to strive for our last end by employing means proportionate to it, which end can be obtained in the supernatural order only by divine faith. Hence, needlessly to endanger this bulwark of salvation is contrary to the divine and to the natural law. Such company-keeping is, accordingly, against the First Commandment of God. That commandment enjoins upon us the worship of God; whatever contravenes the true worship of god is a sin against the First Commandment.

This is a practical matter the importance of which is apparently only too often not fully realized by our Catholic young people and their parents. We therefore repeat that the Church earnestly warns her children against mixed marriages and even strictly forbids them. No sensible Catholic will marry a person belonging to another religion. The nature and purpose of marriage demand true piety and virtue in both parties, in order that they may assist and sanctify each other. Therefore, the Catholic who knowingly and willingly marries a person having no religious or moral convictions or professing a false religion, does wrong. There can be no true unity of mind and heart, no harmony between husband and wife, least of all in the up-bringing of children, if they differ in this most essential matter of religious belief. But the Church's opposition to mixed marriages rests upon a more important consideration even than that. She regards the Sacrament of Matrimony as a symbol of Christ's union with His Church and *a nursery of souls*. Hence she is perfectly justified in disapproving of mixed marriages and forbidding them. When she does permit them by granting special dispensation, it is only with the greatest sorrow and reluctance and under certain well defined conditions. We say: *only under certain well defined conditions*; for the divine law forbidding these marriages when there is proximate danger to the faith of the Catholic party or the children cannot be dispensed by any human authority whatsoever.

Mixed marriages being so serious and deplorable an evil—how serious and deplorable it would take whole pages to tell—it can be easily understood that the Catholic person who listlessly and wantonly keeps company with a non-Catholic, caring little or nothing about the jeopardy in which his or her own faith is thereby placed, is often guilty of a mortal sin against the faith by starting and nursing such a dangerous association which very likely, developing into a mixed marriage, will ultimately destroy the faith, as it is known to do in so many sad cases. Not only the final apostasy is a sin, but also the incipient dallying with the danger of it by thoughtlessly or frivolously courting or encouraging one not of the faith towards a dangerous and baneful mixed marriage. It must be admitted that not all mixed marriages are of this stamp; some, though comparatively very, very few, develop fortunately for both parties; but for the luke-warm and heedless Catholic a mixed marriage is usually synonymous with the Catholic party's defection from the faith. This defection practically begins the first day of the ill-fated courtship.

It is, therefore, ordinarily wrong and sinful for a Catholic party to keep company with a non-Catholic; and such company-keeping is matter for the confessional. If all Catholics, as soon as they are aware that they are keeping company with a non-Catholic, would mention this in the confessional, whether they feel guilty of sin or not, many a fatal mixed marriage would be nipped in the bud through the kindly advice of the experienced priest, to the temporal and eternal welfare of the penitent.

**A certain man made this statement: "A young man that cannot look at a young lady without experiencing some lustful or sexual attractions, whether this be on the street or otherwise—with that man there is something wrong, abnormal." Is this statement correct? Would you kindly give me complete information on this question?**

In answer to this we would say that the statement is not exactly correct. God, you know, has given certain instincts and passions for a wise purpose. Man is drawn strongly and agreeably towards woman (and woman towards man) for the purpose of honorable marriage. Were a man without these passions and instincts he would never marry—and the human family would perish. Man is supposed to master his passions in accordance with God's law; and no man is tempted beyond his strength. God has said it. The sexual instinct is so strong in man generally because it is God's way in bringing man and woman to be husband and wife. The sexual instinct in man goes out to woman generally, just as in woman it goes out to man generally. But it may be indulged only towards the one woman who is his wife and has won his love in honorable marriage. Any sexual indulgence outside matrimony is condemned by the Almighty God. To employ it otherwise is to disobey the orders of nature's God.

**Is it sinful, if I like a person of the opposite sex, to pray that that person will keep company with me? I am single and feel that marriage is my vocation.**



No; it is not sinful. On the contrary, it is a good and virtuous thing to do. We should turn to God for everything, in everything, just as a child turns to its father. Of course, we take it for granted that the person you refer to is a good Catholic. We cannot utter too many solemn warnings against mixed marriages and all associations that lead thereto. Here especially the principle holds good, “Resist the beginnings.” Love makes blind. Pray that God may let you contract a good Catholic marriage and that He may preserve you from the great evil of a mixed marriage.

### **Must a girl obey her parents as to whom she marries if the man is a Catholic?**

Parents and other superiors may exceed the limits of their lawful authority by interfering with their children’s vocation, namely, by forcing or unduly urging their sons to enter the priesthood or a religious community, or their daughters to enter a convent, or both the one and the other to enter the married state; or by preventing their sons and daughters from embracing a state of life to which their vocation leads them, be it the priesthood, the religious life, virginity in the world, or the married state. In this, children are not obliged to obey anyone, for it belongs to them by right to choose that vocation which, according to their judgment and inclination, may best help them to become useful members of society and what is more important than all, to make sure of their eternal destiny.

Of course, as in the case in question, it is only the part of prudence to consult the parents. Two heads are better than one.

### **Would a girl do wrong by keeping up correspondence with a boy against her mother’s wishes?**

Of course, she would. The fourth Commandment, “Honor thy father and thy mother,” commands, among other things, obedience to parents. Children must obey their parents in all that is not sin; and in this obedience must be included a prompt and willing desire to do, not only what is explicitly commanded, but also what the parents desire and what the children know would please them. Parents take the place of God Himself, and, therefore, to disobey them is to disobey the Father in heaven. Hence, when the parents’ will is made known by command or by prohibition (as in your case), the children should consider it as sacred as if God had commanded it by an angel from heaven. If they truly love their parents, and esteem them as representatives of God, they will hold nothing more sacred than to follow all their parents’ wishes and avoid what would displease them, whether the parents be present or absent. Such is the will of God. God never blesses a disobedient child.

### **Is it a sin if when a young man takes you out he puts his arm around your waist feelingly against your will?**

In this connection we would say that, generally, a young man will take all the liberties a girl will allow, but the more she gives in the less he will think of her. We often hear it said, “I would never marry a girl that allows undue familiarities.”

A girl should remember that *true* love and willingness to take liberties rarely go together. At the first attempt to take liberties, a girl should put her foot down hard. A man never loves a girl so much and so truly as when she keeps him at a proper distance and makes him respect and reverence her—makes him feel that when he is in her presence he is in the presence of something almost sacred. A girl should never make concessions to her lover. By this we mean that she should never to anything that she would hesitate to do in the presence of her sister or her mother.

With this all sensible girls—and there are many such—will wholly agree; according to this they will conduct themselves.

Those that foolishly scorn such sane advice, because of girlish silliness and giddiness must needs pay for their rashness with misery—misery that, so to speak, exacts compound interest, often for life.

As regards the question-no; it is not a sin if it is really against her will and she emphatically lets it be known as such. She should see to it that it does not happen again.

**A Catholic girl intends to marry a non Catholic man. Ought she to take this non Catholic to the priest a while before the marriage or wait until just before the marriage? He does not intend to join the Church.**

She should, of course, take him to the priest at least six weeks before the marriage, that there may be ample time to give him those instructions so important even if he does not intend to become a Catholic. He must at least know what his future wife believes, that is to say, something about the Catholic religion, what promises he must make, the nature of marriage, its duties, responsibilities, and privileges.

But so many girls seem to think they can just pick out their non Catholic friend and take him to the priest with a brazen; “Well, here we are; marry us quick!” What folly! What right has a girl to do anything like that when mixed marriages are strictly forbidden by the Church? If she thinks she simply must have that non Catholic for her husband, she should first go alone to see the priest, without taking her friend along and before making him any promises; and, having stated the case to her priest or confessor, she should unhesitatingly and generously follow his advice. That will mean much for her happiness, everything, in fact. And that is what every good Catholic girl will do.

**Would it be wrong for a Catholic girl to keep company with a non-Catholic man with the intention of marriage, if she knows that she can persuade him to turn Catholic before marriage?**

If experience teaches us right, those conversions before marriage are often more or less pretended. Often enough they are due only to a desire of contracting the marriage; and they would never be as much as thought of apart from it. Hence, not being the fruit of sincere conviction, the products of the conversion are usually far below par. We admit that there are exceptions, but these merely confirm the rule. While some of these matrimonial converts become veritable saints and even put to shame the Catholic party, many of them—if we are to believe those who know—are no credit to the religion they espouse merely to obtain a certain partner in matrimony. Surely, between a mixed marriage and a convert marriage there is a world of difference: the latter is by far the lesser evil; but the best and only thing is for Catholics to *marry their own*. This may be stating the matter rather plainly and boldly; but it is for the instruction of our young people, whose life is still before them and whose happiness is yet in the making. Only some time ago we inquired about a good Catholic girl who, about fifteen years back, entered a convert-before-marriage matrimonial contract. We learnt that neither she nor her husband nor her children are known as Catholic. They are all irreligious to the core. It is but one case of thousands.

**He is an excellent young man in every other way. Drinking is his only fault. He has even been drunk once that I know of. But I think the world of him. Would you advise me to marry him? I think I could reform him easily.**

Absolutely no! On the contrary, we strongly advise you to break with him at once. Marriage is no reformatory, as you may learn to your lifelong regret. It is hard to conceive of any creature on earth more miserable than the wife of a drunkard. The late saintly Father Elliott, of the Paulist Fathers, in one of his mission sermons on intemperance, lets such a wife speak to us. Her words are the best answer to your question:

“Listen to my sermon. Once I was free; I was a pure and affectionate girl and my companions said I was handsome. I loved God and kept the rules of His Holy Church. Oh, how happy I was! I had the happiness of religion, the happiness of home and of loving friends; all peace and joy were mine. And now look at me; I am a drunkard’s wife. Notice how sham-faced I am. The name I bear is a badge of infamy; and I could show you scars and bruises that are the badges of my slavery. Oh, what a fool I was! When that man asked me to marry him, my father turned him out of doors, for he smelled drink upon him. My mother’s very tears protested against him; my priest warned me to give him up. But he deceived me. He swore to me that if I married him, he would never drink again, and he swore that he loved me and would be a true, a loving husband. Was there

ever a lie so deadly as his lie to me? He never really loved anything as he loved drink; he has never loved wife or child or his own immortal soul half as much as he always has loved drink.”

“Thus far the drunkard’s wife,” says Father Elliott. “See her as she slouches away, bent with premature age, shrinking from the sight of men, and looking forward to her early and miserable death.”

A girl who would take such a step as you are contemplating is not only consummately silly; she is, in the expressive slang of the day, positively crazy.

### **Of the modern world’s amusements and entertainments for young people, which ones would you consider all right and clean for Catholic young folks to attend?**

Young people must have their amusement; and it is often quite puzzling in our day to determine the character of that amusement. However, the question has been asked, and we purpose to give a brief answer. But first of all we must say that it is difficult to be precise about amusements. A safe rule to follow is this: if after any amusement you feel less like looking into the face of God or, let us say, into the face of a good and loving mother, abstain from that amusement thereafter.

Though dancing always contains an element of danger for the angelic virtue and each one must know whether for him or her it is an occasion of sin which necessitates abstaining from it at times or always, still our Catholic young folks may go to dances of the right kind, under the right auspices, at the right time. Since young people will dance, home dances, or dances in private halls, under good supervision, are greatly to be encouraged. They can be quite innocent and socially beneficial.

Wholesome movies that are or could be on the “white list” may be attended though it is a deplorable fact that the majority of motion pictures have been unwholesome, to say the very least, --nay, a soul-killing plague. Great care must be exercised in the selection of only good shows.

Parish “sociables” and entertainments and plays are among the very best forms of amusement for our Catholic young people. There they meet each other and get acquainted; and the result is an increased number of good Catholic marriages, to the most desirable decrease of the number of mixed marriages and broken lives.

One of the best places for amusements is the home, the Catholic family circle. Parents should encourage and provide for amusements there. We enumerate a few: music, books, various games, conversations, the visits and entertainment of Catholic friends and neighbors. All such amusements can be made joyous, beautiful, and never-to-be-forgotten in their salutary influence on mind and heart, when indulged in with Christian restraint and virtue.

Playing cards at home or in the parish hall for amusement and competition in skill is a perfectly innocent and proper social entertainment, even on Sunday. Nor is there anything wrong in playing for small sums. It lends interest to the game. Of course, moderation is necessary. One can go to excess in everything. Gambling, by the way, might be defined as playing for stakes at the risk of losing what may be required for the maintenance of oneself and family.

St. Aloysius was once engaged in a game of checkers when he was asked what he would do if he knew he were to die in five minutes. “I would keep right on playing.” He answered. He was doing it in the right way, with a good intention, for God; for even amusement of the right kind in due season may help us save our souls. We can make everything, even our innocent good times prayer. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God,” says Holy Writ.

### **What is the proper age for a girl to go with boys? At what time should she return home?**

To go out with boys occasionally under proper auspices is one thing and to keep steady company with a boy with the intention of marriage is another. In both cases, it is highly advisable to meet your company in your own home in the presence of the family — not to go out at all or rarely. Any other way savors of recklessness to say the least. When going out, one should always return at a reasonable hour — say ten o'clock.

But you wish to know *when*. No girl should accept the attentions of a young man until (1) she has become a good housekeeper, until (2) she has become a fairly good seamstress, until (3) she has acquired the virtue of staying at home, until (4) the young man is able to support a family and has saved at least something to start with, and, finally, unless (5) there is some intention of marrying him.

It may be, however, that you want the exact age. That is difficult to determine, since it depends upon so many circumstances. We might say, for the sake of definiteness, that since in this country girls rarely marry before the age of eighteen and boys are usually a few years older, and since steady company-keeping, or courtship, should ordinarily not be longer than six months or a year, the proper age for going with a boy is about eighteen at the very earliest. But even that is rather too early. The longer a girl under twenty keeps her heart and mind love-proof, that is, in easy possession and full control, the better for her present and future happiness.

The above is about regular and honorable courtships. The irregular courtships of young people in their teens are usually nothing else than sinful flirtations. Such “puppy love” ought rather to be called “the devil’s game,” since it is one of the most common and crafty ruses by which Satan gradually and insensibly lures innocent boys and girls into ugly sin and filthy vice under the guise of love.

**Could a dispensation for first cousins to marry be obtained if there were danger to the man’s soul on account of this disappointment in love, e.g., if the young man would resume his courtship with a non-Catholic girl after his cousin gave him up, or if he would take to drink and get reckless and not care what happened?**

These reasons for dispensation might be sufficient for *presentation* to the proper ecclesiastical authorities. If they are accepted as sufficient, steps may then be taken to obtain the necessary dispensation.

We may remark, however, that it is to be deplored whenever the above mentioned dispensation must be obtained. St. Thomas gives a number of reasons why the Church has enacted restrictive laws against marriages between blood relations. 1. The reverence which kindred owe each other, being offspring of one common stock or progenitor. If relatives could freely intermarry, the feeling of respect which now exists between near relatives would soon change to indifference. 2. Charity is another reason; for good Catholics by marrying those of their own religion, but of different families, extend the influence of Catholic principles, the natural consequence of a virtuous and holy wedlock. 3. Free and common intermarriage would undoubtedly open the door to a frightful laxity of morals among relatives; if they lived under the same roof or exchanged frequent and unrestricted visits, an undue and dangerous familiarity would necessarily spring up. This is the natural outcome of the loss of respect, mentioned as the first motive. 4. Intermarriages between persons of the same blood are, according to physicians of high standing, fraught with dire consequences to the health of their children. (Cf. St. Thos. II. 2, q. 154, a.9.)

**I am a married woman, but I have been separated (not divorced) from my husband for some years, with the permission of the proper ecclesiastical authorities. I have a very dear man friend. He understands my situation in life and knows we can never be anything more than friends; and he respects me in every way. Is it a sin for us to kiss?**

Such conduct and that whole “honorable and platonic” friendship which you question implies is absolutely and utterly to be condemned. You are a married woman. A learned author, speaking of the heinous crime of adultery, says: “When David cast that one wanton look and nursed the thoughts and imaginations it engendered, he did not suspect that within a short time he would be both an adulterer and a homicide. It would

have been easy for him to resist the temptation from the very start; but once he allowed his low passion to be inflamed, resistance was out of the question. From this reflection you will learn to be as cautious against danger as you must be distrustful of yourself in it. Resist manfully and decidedly at the beginning, and the sequel will create no difficulty.”—You are playing with fire.

**I am keeping company with a good young man and would like to marry him. I am sure he would make me happy and I could make him a happy home. But he is not a Catholic. What should I do?**

What are you to do! The answer is obvious. Keep this commandment of the church: “Not to marry persons who are not Catholics... And remember that it is already an initial breaking of that commandment to keep company with a non-Catholic and a *matter for advice in the confessional*.

What are you to do? When he calls on you again say something to this effect: “John, I have been acting wrongly all the while. I cannot and I may not marry you, so I should not have been keeping company with you. You are not a Catholic, you see. So it must all be over between us. You may not come to see me any more. If I every marry, that man must be a devout and practical Catholic. So please go. This is final. But if you wish to study the Catholic religion, here are some books I have for you. In case you are interested and wish to take instructions with a view to embracing the Catholic religion *out of conviction* that it is the true religion. I can refer you to Father Brown. He would be glad to explain everything to you. And, John, after you have joined the Church and faithfully practiced your new religion and received the Sacraments frequently, I will be glad to see you again; for, you know, I hope to marry a good Catholic man some day. So good-bye, and —I hope it will not be forever, John”

**If two Catholic persons are divorced, but do not marry again, are they excommunicated from the Church?**

We know (Canon 1128) that there is a grave obligation for the married couple to live together, unless there be a legitimate reason for the contrary. Sometimes it becomes simply impossible to live together and a temporary or perpetual separation must be effected, in which case the matter should be submitted to the proper pastor, who will steer it to the bishop should circumstances so demand or permit. Sometimes even a so-called divorce may be secured, with the parties’ understanding that they are still married none the less, only living apart, and provided scandal is removed. However, before applying for divorce it is well for such Catholics to remember that mere separation can give them, from the civil point of view, the same advantages, and that it safeguards the demands of Catholic teaching.

Having thus explained away any misunderstanding about *divorced Catholics*, we answer your question by saying that divorced Catholics are not excommunicated *unless* they attempted to marry again. They are not excommunicated because of the divorce. But the Plenary Council of Baltimore III, 124, places under excommunication reserved to the Ordinary “Catholics who, after a civil divorce, shall have attempted to contract a new marriage, the legitimate consort still living.”

**Can a non-Catholic man and a Catholic girl contract a mixed marriage before a priest if the man cannot produce a baptismal certificate but knows he was baptized?**

The baptismal certificate is the most important document to be furnished before the celebration of marriage. As occasion requires, the pastor should also demand the baptismal certificate of the non-Catholic party. In case it cannot be secured because the records have been lost, or if in that case parents or sponsors or some trustworthy witness refuse to give their testimony as to the moral certainty that baptism was administered, or unless the man was baptized as an adult and can take an oath to that effect, a dispensation must be secured *ad cautelam* (to make sure) for disparity of worship at the same time as for mixed religion. This should be done in every case of serious doubt, since many of the Protestant sects no longer believe in baptism or, if they do, they administer it in a very doubtful manner.

**Is it dangerous or wrong to correspond with a non-Catholic boy, just for friendship's sake, nothing more, or is it classed under company-keeping?**

Your question implies that you know what many seem to forget, namely, that, since mixed marriages are forbidden, mixed company-keeping is forbidden also. We might classify such letter-writing as you mention as incipient company-keeping. We cannot exactly see the why and the wherefore of this correspondence. If it is to instruct him in the Catholic faith, it were better to send him Catholic books of instruction.