

Other 14-Year-Olds Have Dates, So Why Can't I?

By FATHER THOMAS

I'm nearly fifteen and a sophomore in the all-girls Catholic high. For my birthday I'd like to have a boy-girl party—my mother thinks it's a great idea, but Daddy says I'm too young. When other girls have parties, I go along, and Dad picks me up afterwards. At school my friends talk about dances and dates, while I feel like an old maid. Shouldn't a girl of fifteen have some privileges?

Yes, Ellen, you should have more privileges than a girl of fourteen, but not as many as a girl of sixteen or seventeen. I can see from your well-written letter that you are a good student and probably quite mature for your age.

You have made out a good case for your position. Your mother thinks it's a good idea. The party will be in your own home where your parents can supervise it and also have the opportunity to meet your friends. What's wrong with Dad?

For the moment, let us try to put ourselves in his position in order to see things from his viewpoint. He's probably not specially concerned about this particular party in itself.

He obviously wants you to have a good time and shows such interest in your welfare that he is willing to set aside his own plans on some evenings in order to pick you up after a party. On the other hand, he has taken the clear position that early dating is wrong.

He does not want you to date at your age, and he is not willing to promote early dating among others by allowing you to have a party that involves dating.

As he sees it, parents have to hold the line on this issue. You're thinking in terms of just one party. He knows from experience that if he permits one, and other parents permit one, there will be many more.

Where do you draw the line? Either early dating is all right or it is not. If it is not, one cannot afford to make any concessions.

Blind Priest Weaver

Spokane — (NC) — There is a 78-year-old blind priest here who has a worldwide apostolate, although his "rectory" for the past 13 years has been a loom-filled workshop.

Most Franciscan Sisters in the United States wear one of Father Henry Moffatt's white-corded cinctures, and priests as far away as New Guinea wear his confession stoles of mercerized cotton.

ALMOST ALL of the black shawls worn by Holy Name Sisters in Spokane come from his big, eight-harness loom, located in the basement of Sacred Heart Hospital here.

Pope Pius XII was "deeply moved" when he received an amice woven by Father Moffatt as an expression of the priest's gratitude for being allowed to offer Mass despite his blindness.

Father Moffatt, now assigned to St. Charles parish here, was 65 years old when the last vestige of his sight was removed by surgery. At an age when most people with total faculties retire, Father Moffatt began to learn the exacting techniques required for a continuing life of service.

Every Sunday Father Moffatt says two late Masses at St. Charles, and spends long hours in the confessional before Mass. He hears confessions and gives conferences at five local convents. He says a private Mass daily in the invalid's chapel at Sacred Heart Hospital.

Wool weaving is both a hobby and a therapy. With ten treadles on an eight-harness loom and a maze of threads to be tied down, Father Moffatt has plenty of therapeutic exercises.

The priest was graduated to the "professional rank" of weaving during the Marian Year in 1950 when his project was weaving the Mass vestments honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary. With knifes, needles, bobbins, burs, amice, chalice veil and purificators.

Father Moffatt is the oldest of five children, all of whom entered religious life. A brother, Father John Moffatt, S.J., is a retreat master and partly responsible for the spread of Father's handwork to the far corners of the world.

Father Moffatt's three sisters joined the community here of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Sister Eulalia Torres of Holy Names College visits him once a week to help him with some of the more difficult chores connected with weaving and, to act as "private secretary."

Father Moffatt minimizes the severity of his handicap. "There are many things more difficult than blindness," he says. "Yet, sightless eyes can twinkle."

Pope's Message Asks Tolerance

Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope John XXIII reads his Easter message to a crowd estimated at 150,000 from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica. The 78-year-old Pontiff cited Communist persecution of the Church and racial intolerance and discrimination as major evils marring the joy of the holy season. His words were heard by millions of radio listeners throughout the world.

Children's Communion

Light For Dark World

Vatican City — (NC) Pope John XXIII told 3,000 French children that the child receiving Holy Communion can bring light into a world plunged into darkness.

THE POPE spoke in French at a special audience granted to the children in the Vatican's Hall of Benedictions.

The children, members of the Eucharistic Movement of France, were in Rome to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the decree of Pope St. Pius X which lowered the age for First Communion and encouraged frequent reception.

Pope John called the children "poles" through the Eucharist and gently explained to them how many have lost appreci-

ation of the strength to be found in the Blessed Sacrament or have abandoned it all together. He continued: "When eucharistic terror lessons or is extinguished, men withdraw from Christ, and it is very difficult for men then to understand one another: love grows cold and sin invades minds and hearts."

"Beloved children, it is up to you and to your beautiful movement to prevent on your part the world from being plunged into darkness. You are little lamps that burn on the altar reminding those who are distracted, disappointed or who have wandered from the great and comforting truth of the presence of Christ in His Church and in the world of the whole Christ.

His body, blood, soul and divinity, the spiritual food of our souls and of our bodies, the sure companion of our road, token of the glory that awaits us in heaven. "COMFORTED with the presence of Christ we have nothing to fear; taught by Him everything is clear; guided by Him, though the way may be rough, we do not run the risk of falling into the abyss."

The Pope encouraged the children to continue giving a good example, leading their elders to the Communion rail. And he told them that they could return to their homes and tell their companions "we saw Rome, we prayed at the tombs of the Apostles and we were blessed by the Vicar of Jesus Christ."

Latin Americans Set Up Relief Aid

New York — (NC) — Recent progress in developing national Catholic charities organizations in Latin American countries "has exceeded all expectations," according to a top U.S. Catholic relief official.

Mgr. Edward E. Swannstrom, executive director of Catholic Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference, made the statement on his return here from a week-long meeting in Bogota, Colombia, of Catholic relief leaders.

PARTICIPATING in the meeting were CBS-NWC representatives and representatives of national Catholic charities organizations in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay.

"Five years ago we could not have possibly held a meeting like this," Mgr. Swannstrom said. At that time, he explained, none of the Latin American national

representatives of the recent meeting had national Catholic charities organizations.

The Monsignor said that the Latin American representatives repeatedly expressed their thanks to the American people for U.S. surplus food and clothing.

No Visitors Admitted To Stigmatic's Ordeal

Spokane — (NC) — Visitors were barred during Holy Week from the room where famed stigmatic Therese Neumann relives the Passion of Christ.

THE FATHER priest of this small Severian village, Father Josef Raber, prohibited visitors from watching the 69-year-old stigmatic's sufferings for the second year in succession on the grounds that her health is too delicate.

Catholic Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference, the overseas relief agency of the U.S. Bishops, conducts programs in nine countries in South and Central America and the Caribbean. The largest is in Chile.

For the past three decades thousands of the faithful and the curious have visited Koenigsbrunn on Good Friday to watch bleeding from what appear to be wounds in Miss Neumann's hands, feet and forehead.

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WHY DO YOU suppose he is so opposed to early dating? It appears that some other parents, at least, think it's all right. Well, Ellen, there are a good number of considerations that can enter into his thinking. First, because he is your father, he knows that he is responsible to God for your adequate Christian guidance, training, and development.

He also loves you, and he knows that you are a girl before you start acting like a woman.

Second, he recognizes the obvious fact that you have reached puberty and consequently are rapidly approaching physical maturity. Although you may never have given it a serious thought, you are being brought to the level of the wonderful privilege of motherhood.

You may protest that dating is just for fun — you're certainly not thinking about this more serious type implied in the above explanation.

Neither your father nor I have to tell you that the emotional qualities associated with this privilege can be and have been abused.

This may appear unthinkable to you now because you do not fully appreciate the force of human affection and love. Young love can be as compelling as old. Your faith desires that you have a little better understanding of yourself as a woman and a little wider experience in dealing with people before you are exposed to the necessarily more personal, intimate contacts involved in dating.

What will these girls be like at twenty-five or thirty? Yet they will still have some forty years of at least biological life ahead of them.

I suppose every teenager starts dating with this casual attitude, but if dating can be so easily maintained at this superficial level for long, why is it that roughly one out of every seven girls entering marriage is only seventeen or younger?

Further, your father realizes that your years in high school are of the highest importance in preparing you for a happy and successful life. If you are distracted by frequent dating and the demands of a busy social life, you are not going to be able to apply yourself to your studies and to the mastery of such necessary domestic arts as cooking, sewing, and running a home.

Let's face it, Ellen, how well prepared for marriage or for life are your friends who are now discussing their frequent parties and dates?

They will have little interest in further studies or training and will probably marry young. What besides their bodies will they bring to their marriages? This is strong language but it seems necessary to remind American teenage girls that their current, widespread, shallow preoccupation with boys is depriving them of the kind of preparation they need to be capable of companionship in marriage with the type of man they would like to marry.

I know it is difficult to take the long range view when others are being short-sighted.

If you now feel like an old maid, it's not because a fifteen-year-old ought to have dates, and you don't; rather, it's because you compare yourself with your friends. Remember, a normal person appears odd among a group of abnormal. Your father is trying to keep you normal in a highly confused society.



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