



★ SALESIAN SPIRIT – ST. CAFASSO'S CONFERENCES – 9

Fr. Pathiaraj Rayappan SDB



ON GAMBLING AND PUBLIC SHOWS

Gambling is another kind of relaxation similar to socializing and is quite common among priests. Another type of relaxation priests sometimes resort to is participating in public shows and amusements. By reason of our ministry, we know more than anyone else of the serious pitfalls and inconveniences that these produce: the brawls, the discord, the blasphemies, the waste, the troubles of families that come from gambling, the dissipation, the immorality and even the irreligion that very often arise from these public entertainments.

To what extent can the priest participate in them? A great saint gave the following rule of examining three points first: (1) Is it permissible? (2) Is it appropriate? (3) Is it beneficial? I will apply this rule. I will first consider the morality of the action along the lines of legitimacy. I will explain the theory, and then I will apply it to the case of the priest.

This is a simple matter because I have never played or attended any public amusement. What we are going to say will serve to thank the Lord for having kept you away from these mostly bad and dangerous habits. It will help you to conform to this good purpose, and what you will hear can serve as a rule for judging, for providing for the good of those souls, especially of Priests, that the Lord will be entrusting to you.

GAMBLING

Theologians say that gambling can be considered under two aspects, both as a contract and as entertainment. Like any other relaxation, we will take it under the entertainment element. What are the conditions that the theologians speak of for it to be licit so that a priest may take part in it without feeling guilty? Moralists give six conditions: (1) The player does not aim primarily at gain. (2) Moderate money may be used. (3) Too much time is not consumed. (4) The player does not expose himself to any danger of sinning. (5) The play should suit the person, the time and the place. (6) The type of playing is not prohibited by any law. If any of the above goes lacking, it would

be a sin. Whether the sin would be serious or light will depend on the matter and the consequences.

(1) The player does not aim primarily at gain. Gambling cannot be permitted if it is not ordered for the relaxation and recreation of the person. So, if it is directed at making money or for its pure passion, then it is a sin. The commitment with which they play, the anxiety, the restlessness they feel, the time they spend on it, the dejection that arises when they lose ... all prove that the aim is something else!

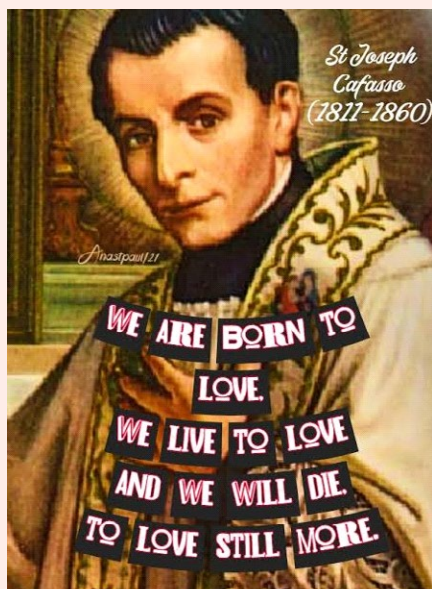
(2) Moderate money may be used! But how to calculate what is excess!!!

(3) One should not take up too much time! It should be like the salt in our food! A pinch is enough. Otherwise, it spoils everything! Can a priest gamble often and every day? St. Peter Damian sought out the Bishop addicted to gambling and told him, "Does it seem that it is a good thing to debase your hands among the cards which will soon have to bless the people, handle sacred vessels, to offer sacrifices, and to dispense the Sacraments?" If the priest does it every day and never misses it, ... this will become his profession! He is a gambler! If one begins to worry about the game, he has it on his mind always ... even during the celebration of the sacraments! Don't you like that people speak well of you after your death?

(4) The player does not expose himself to any danger of sin! What dangers? The danger of scandal to the people, the danger of dissipation, the danger of wasting time, the danger of wasting money, the danger of neglecting one's duty! A priest was gambling. He was called to assist a dying man. He wanted to finish his game and go. And he went. On entering the room of the dying, someone told him, "He died. Go and play in peace!" He learned a lesson.

(5) The play should suit the person, the place and the time. Place refers to where it is played: public places, cafes, clubs ... these are not for priests! Time refers to the time of play: on feast days? At the time of Church functions or late in the evening? Can the priest permit it? With what people: immoral lay people who stay away from the Church and the sacraments? (If it is to win them over to the Lord, go ahead!)

If the priest is addicted to it, the knowledge, piety, devotion, concentration, obedience ... everything is



lost and ruined! So don't gamble.

Public shows and amusements

Can the priest take part in public shows and amusements? He is a priest, a man who has renounced everything profane to live and consecrated himself entirely to the interests of His God! We will categorize the shows into (1) Public performances and (2) Dances. They are indifferent and not sinful in themselves, but they are very far from it in practice. The quality of people, their way of dressing, their way of speaking, their gestures ... everything is an incentive to sin! The theatres, the shows, and the entertainments of the Christian must be the Shrines, the Basilicas, the tombs of the martyrs, the feasts, the functions, and the common prayers (Tertullian). The theatres, the amusements, and feasts for us priests have to be the Churches, the prayer rooms and the study rooms. Our celebrations should be the administration of the sacraments, the visits to the sick, and the exercise of our ministry.

As St. Jerome told a priest, let us leave frivolousness, vanity, rejoicing, and noisy celebrations to the worldly. For ourselves, let us choose retreat, quiet, piety and devotion so that the people, edified by our exemplary nature and conduct, learn to detach themselves, scorn the follies of the transient nature of this world and seek to earn in Heaven those joys that will never end.