

# GOSSIP: EVERYONE GETS HURT



We couldn't believe what she had worn, whom she had been seen with, what crazy thing she had done this time. There was always something to talk about when the subject was that girl from English class (no one ever remembers her name.) Exchanging shocked looks and harsh opinions of the juicy stories about her was good procrastination material before we focused again on the homework we were supposed to be doing. One of our friends cut in with, "Guys... she has a soul too you know." Then, just as quick as the conversation had taken off, it came to a screeching halt.

We didn't mean to objectify anyone, to only see their exterior. We didn't mean to take away their dignity. We didn't mean to be nasty. But talking together we got carried away and the truth was, we sinned against our sister in Christ.

Jesus says in Matthew 12:36 says, "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken." We have a serious obligation to be careful about whether we build up or tear down others with our words.

Gossip has become so easy with social networking sites like Facebook and the ease of unlimited texting. People feel the need to know what others are doing, especially the rich and famous; the magazine industry feeds off this need. Scientific researchers have gone so far as to say that negative gossip is healthy because it helps us to build our relationships and communication skills. This is obviously false – anything that hurts us spiritually is never worth a social benefit.

Did you know that gossip is a sin against the eighth commandment? "Thou shalt not bear false witness" doesn't only refer to lying, but it's a call to "respect the reputation of

persons” (CCC 2477). That means it’s wrong to make a judgment on someone else’s actions or motives without valid reason. It also means we shouldn’t talk to another person about someone else’s faults. People who we don’t know personally, like celebrities, deserve the same respect. The media – magazines, TV, and websites – make it easy for us to objectify others. This way of thinking doesn’t stop at the celebrities we read about; we get in the habit of only seeing the exterior and then looking up from the pages at the people, the souls around us, and doing the same thing.

Besides gossip being harmful to our own souls, we’re also hurting the one we gossip about. After you hear some piece of gossip about someone, isn’t that what you’re thinking about next time you see them? I know I am. We look at them a little differently... have a slightly different attitude about them... maybe even exclude them because of what we heard. If we aren’t constantly striving to love, are we really walking in Christ’s footsteps?

I understand, gossip is fun, but I believe that you and I can do better. I believe we can replace shallow conversations with deep and meaningful ones. I believe we can stop selfishly advancing our reputation at the expense of others. I believe we can open our eyes to see more than just an exterior. I believe we can see Christ in each other instead. I believe we can stop worrying about how others see us, and focus only on how God sees us. I believe we have the self-control to bite our tongue and not give in to the guilty pleasure of gossip.

There’s so much good we can see in each others’ souls if we just try a little harder.