



Style, Sex, & Substance: 10 Catholic Women Consider the Things That Really Matter

Hallie Lord (Editor)

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Who is to say who the authentic Catholic woman is? And how do the perils and pitfalls of modern society impact that vision?

Here is a fresh look at life from the perspective of ten Catholic women who live in the spotlight of the Internet -- ten bloggers who keep it real every day with their personal posts relating their triumphs, trials, and temptations for all to see.

In the same way, nothing is off limits in Style, Sex, & Substance. Each of these women brings a refreshingly open and humorous perspective to growing in faith and improving their relationship with Christ.

Enjoy real stories, real struggles, and best of all, real faith and trust that God will bring out the best in all circumstances -- whether in the family room, the bedroom, or at work.

Contributors include:

--Hallie Lord

--Jennifer Fulwiler

--Danielle Bean

--Rachel Balducci

--Simcha Fisher

--Anna Mitchell

--Barbra Nicolosi

--Rebecca Teti

--Elizabeth Duffy

--Karen Edmisten

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Davidnsharon Lunt says

So many different women; so many different stories! But in all of them is the echo of my own life and experiences. I am sure that is why I couldn't put this book down and why I go back and re-read it often.

Donna says

Reading this book felt like sitting down with a good friend or big sister and enjoying a cup of coffee and good conversation. For many readers, some of the writers will be familiar as they share their wit and wisdom through their blogs.

The writing is intelligent but never condescending. It is encouraging but never demeaning. Topics that are covered are near and dear to the authors' hearts and are expressed with seemingly genuine concern for the reader.

Each chapter ends with a number of thoughtful questions for the reader to ponder. This book would make an excellent resource for a book club or small discussion group.

Colleen Rein says

This was a good read, but it is more like a collection of blog entries than a book.

Theresa Thomas says

Style, Sex and Substance. The title of the book caught my eye. Hey, I like all three of those things, I thought, and then, I am a Catholic woman. Should a Catholic woman even think that?

Um. Yes.

Yes, I think she should. And if you don't believe me, look at the subtitle: 10 Catholic Women Consider the Things that Really Matter. These things matter. Whew. These things really matter.

The hook for me in the title was style. 'Style' is class. One definition is "an elegant and fashionable way of living". Style is the antithesis of the image of the denim jumper so readily assumed to be the standard uniform of conservative homeschool moms like me. Yes, style interests me. I've been fighting the frumpy stereotype of homeschool mom since I first ditched my sleek pointy business heels and slid into slippers, stayed home, and then later started teaching my nine children more than 20 years ago. (I have never worn denim jumpers, for the record, but it is the assumption that most conservative homeschooling moms do, at least where I live.)

I certainly want to embrace style, and run far from the image of frumpy housewife stereotype, especially now that I am in middle age. Oops. Did I just admit that? Ok, so it's true. When I saw Style, Sex and Substance, I was intrigued by the idea of style combined with me, and thus this book, supposing a stylish, sexy and substantial modern me had a distinct advantage over other books on my nightstand waiting to be reviewed. I admit that's why I picked it first.

The author/editor of Style, Sex and Substance, Hallie Lord, is a devoted Catholic wife and mother who strives, like a lot of us do, for holiness. Unlike most of us, however, she has a personal shopping business where she helps dress other women beautifully, modestly and within a budget. How cool is that? Her example demonstrates we can be moms, strive for holiness and have style. Yay!

I started with the chapter entitled Style: Balance, Beauty and You. I was not disappointed. I read about stylish modesty (yes, this exists), the power of transformation, and wrestling with vanity, the latter of which admittedly can be a pitfall when paying attention to style. This chapter offered wisdom on the balance of paying enough attention and paying too much attention to self and wardrobe, and it included a few checkpoints for self-evaluation:

“If you wake up in the morning and open your closet only to find that nothing fits but pajamas and sweatpants, that’s a problem... If you avoid intimacy with your husband because you feel unattractive, that’s a problem... If you are constantly tired because you never have time to exercise, rest or spend time alone, that too is a problem...”

The best thing about offering these checkpoints is that Hallie simultaneously offers helpful suggestions for improvement. I’d have taken notes to pass along to my own girls if everything hadn’t already been laid out nicely in the pages of the book. To be honest, some of what Hallie writes I already knew deep in my heart. Some of this I had already tried to live. But reading the words presented in a fresh and contemporary way reminded me of how and why I should take care of myself, and how and why I should dress in a pretty and stylish way. It inspired me to press on amidst the daily temptation just to let style go. It was written so well and motivated so much. Thank you, Hallie!

Encouraged, I dug into the other chapters, which I found to be equally inspiring and totally relevant to a modern Catholic woman and her busy life.

The book is funny. “I can’t write the marriage chapter. I have no business writing the marriage chapter,” begins Danielle Bean on page 117, “My husband and I are just coming off a 24 hour stint of avoiding eye contact because... well, I kind of forget why...” Oh my goodness, this is why so many women love to read what Danielle writes- frankness and humor combined is a lovely thing.

The book is brutally honest. “I’m in my late twenties now. I’ve been a bridesmaid eight times... every other woman contributing to this book is married. Am I jealous? Absolutely,” writes Anna Mitchell in chapter five, Single and Seeking God’s Plan. The reader will find the right perspective with Anna, as she offers advice on vocation, discernment, and dating. I suspect her vocation will be realized soon.

The book is profound. “A receptive woman is the most powerful creature in the world,” writes Simcha Fischer in chapter nine on motherhood, “...without her “yes”, nothing more can happen.” Her intriguing statement is explained in full. Her chapter may change the way you think about being a wife, and will definitely put a zip in your motherhood step and make you feel validated even in changing “poopy” diapers. Simcha is a mother of nine, an in-the-trenches, general of an army of children. Her chapter will help you realize the power of your ‘yes’. March on, mamas, is the message. If she can do it, you can too!

The book is fun and flirty, substantive and serious, even all in the same chapter. I'm talking now specifically about Elizabeth Duffy's chapter about sex. I must admit I did not know that combining bible quotes and Church teaching with practical suggestions and funny anecdotes could mesh so well. Elizabeth's chapter really makes a mama think, and yes, giggle. I think God approves.

I have to admit I loved the chapter Plugging in and Embracing Discipleship in the Twenty First Century contributed by Barbara R. Nicolosi, which deals with storytelling, television, movies and media, for a selfish reason. One of my (yes, practicing Catholic) children works in the thick of Hollywood and I'm tired of explaining to people that his work is important. I hope that media matters. After reading Barbara's chapter you will know that it does. Barbara's writing proves that devoted Catholic women can be brilliant, and she explains perfectly how engaging the culture rather than running from it can make the world a better place for all of us. Even if you live on a tiny farm in rural Kansas and only watch the Food Channel or HGTV, you will find this chapter compelling and relevant.

Style, Sex and Substance includes questions for reflection at the end of each chapter, which makes it just right for a Catholic woman's reading group selection. I was going to offer my sample copy of the book for a giveaway on my blog but then I decided to be selfish. I have six daughters who will benefit from these wonderful entries in time. I'm keeping this one.

You will certainly want to nab a copy of Style, Sex and Substance from your local bookstore or Amazon. I think you'll find after reading it you will be pondering more, complaining less, resolving to embrace your femininity, understanding your Faith, perhaps even signing up for an exercise class for self improvement, cleaning your closet and flirting with your husband. These are all good, relevant and delightful things that a Catholic woman should address and can enjoy, because these things are important. These things matter.

I'm grateful for the wonderfully talented sisters-in-Christ authors who share their insights in Style, Sex and Substance. I'm recommending you invest \$14.95 in this gem of a book and begin integrating the thoughts, suggestions and ideas within its pages into your own joyful authentic Catholic life.

Sarah says

My interest in Hallie Lord's new book, Style, Sex, and Substance: 10 Catholic Women Consider the Things that Really Matter, was pretty high BEFORE the trailer was banned from YouTube.

For one thing, I'm a fan of each of the contributors.

For another, what's not to love about a book that covers style, sex, and things of substance from a Catholic woman's perspective?

I had heard that it was a quick read, and I did, in fact, zip through it like my eyes were on fire.

But here's the thing: it was not just good enough to keep me reading quickly; it was good enough to make me want to reread it and to make me write my name in the front.

Each of the contributors brings a unique voice to the table, but they're all united in what's important: their deep faith and their enthusiasm for putting said faith in practice.

Someone had mentioned to me that the book only got better as you read through, and much to my surprise (I love those early chapter contributors!), I found that to be true. I think the reason the book gets better is because, as you read through it, you go deeper and, while you'll still find yourself laughing, you'll also find yourself marking passages and dog-earing pages to reference later.

Highly recommended for everyone in your life.

Julie Ann Cook says

This collection of insightful essays was definitely worth the read. Each was relatable to me as a Catholic woman and acted as a springboard for reflection. Though some had some deep-reaching subject matter, all were written with levity that made them accessible... and something I was eager to share with several Catholic and Christian girlfriends. I highly recommend this book!

Jen says

Very good insights, and filled with humor. Not a book of sentimental stories - this is about real moms and single women dealing with the career world and today's society. My favorite tip(which may say something about me): Pray Like a Pirate - A-R-R-R ! (Acknowledge, Receive, Relate, Respond)

Deanna says

Great essays, relevant and real.

Amy C. says

I came away from this book thinking about how hard it is to create a book like this. Multi-author books are almost bound to leave the reader less-than-satisfied, because it's hard to connect with so many different personalities in such a short space of time. That said, I think the editor gathered an interesting group of contributors. The book gave me the feeling I often have after a Ladies' Night Out with other Catholic moms: I felt refreshed and grateful for the time I'd spent there, though I didn't really feel in sync with every woman I met there. A few of them were just the person Jesus wanted me to meet at that moment; perhaps the others will become dear friends at a different time, or perhaps not at all. Though the book was broad in scope, and therefore didn't hang together as well as I expected, I still greatly appreciated the effort to bring these different perspectives together in one place.

Lauren says

A bunch of funny, talented, and authentic Catholic women talking about life. A quick, enjoyable, and thought-provoking read! I did find it a tad unrelated, since 9/10 of the writers are married with kids and I

am a single, working young adult. But still good advice.

Heather says

This collection of essays on Catholic womanhood made me laugh, think, and nod along. It's not chick-litty, which is high praise from me. Jennifer F's chapter on motherhood was genuinely funny and I could see myself in her shoes.

Danielle Bean's was surprisingly timely too, on marriage and finding the grace to keep moving forward. I really enjoyed Barbara Nicolosi's on modern media. It was a much more realistic appraisal than Teresa Tomeo's NOISE, which I remember more as a screed with lots of anecdotes and exclamation points. Ms. Nicolosi's referral to papal documents praising modern media like Facebook, Skype, email, blogs, and the like and how they can be used constructively was a breath of fresh air.

High praise. Worth reading.

Joyce says

Wow. What a great book. It was quick to read since it is an anthology of ten chapters, each one focusing on an aspect of how (practically) to be a faithful Catholic woman in the 21st century.

There was so much food for thought and most of the chapters were sprinkled with humour that made the read so enjoyable.

I will be reading this one again to take notes, because it was that good and useful!

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." -St. Catherine of Siena

Megan says

Short little essays perfect for reading while the kids are busy at practice/lessons.

Betsy Dion says

This book has some great essays that will be helpful for any Catholic woman. The first one moved me to tears. If you read much of the female Catholic blogosphere you may already be familiar with some of these women. It is great to see how they live out their faith with authenticity and passion. Don't be put off by the title, the book has more depth than I thought the title implied.

Sarah says

Entertaining as well as thought provoking, this is an excellent starting place for Catholic women to get some guidance and support from their literary 'girlfriends'.

I was especially fond of the marriage and motherhood chapters, the latter of which made me a bit misty in its beautifully written truth.

Definitely worth reading.
