
Books

"American Catholic Etiquette." By Kay Toy Fenner. Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press. Pp. 402. 1961. \$5.95.

by John J. Fritscher

One of the most exciting of Newman's recent Christmas releases relative to practical and tasteful holiday gifting is Kay Toy Fenner's long-awaited *American Catholic Etiquette*.

Author Fenner approaches with refreshing wisdom the proprieties of Catholic life, tempering the courtesies with hearty common sense. Realizing that the basis of all courtesy is charity and that what is socially acceptable often springs from spiritual origins, her compilation of this book of eti-

Covering every possible situation with minute exactness, though never descending to the ridiculous, this volume is a successful gathering between two covers of the currently acceptable social practices employed by Catholics of taste in the United States.

Rarely cloying, never servile, written with the calm balance of the esthetician, the decorous style and genuine content provide interesting reading for the thumbing browser as well as face-saving information for anyone living

THE JOSEPHINUM REVIEW

December 1961

Books: "American Catholic Etiquette."

By Kay Toy Fenner. Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press. Pp. 402. 1961. \$5.95
Book Review by John J. Fritscher (Jack Fritscher)

One of the most exciting of Newman Press' recent Christmas releases relative to practical and tasteful holiday gifting is Kay Toy Fenner's long-awaited *American Catholic Etiquette*.

Author Fenner approaches with refreshing wisdom the proprieties of Catholic life, tempering the courtesies with hearty common sense. Realizing that the basis of all courtesy is charity and that what is socially acceptable often springs from spiritual origins, her compilation of this book of etiquette for sacramental occasions, interfaith meetings, and child guidance is both welcome and timely.

This is the only book in print today which outlines extensively the duties, privileges, suitable dress, and social behavior for a layman taking part in any capacity in a Catholic baptism, First Communion, confirmation, wedding, ordination, funeral, First Solemn Mass, or other social function accompanying the reception of the sacraments. It describes what is proper on these occasions for both Catholic and non-Catholic — not only what is or is not acceptable, but why it is so. In several chapters the author pays particular attention to what is correct for every type of Catholic wedding, including the mixed marriage.

If she is anti-anything, Kay Fenner opposes selfish and pagan gaucherie. With an unemotional rationale she forthrightly proffers positive reasons, both social and spiritual, for preserving — we choose at random — the obligation of the bereaved to receive condolence calls and gives rebuttals against perpetrating such oddities as the outmoded wake.

Covering every possible situation with minute exactness, though never descending to the ridiculous, this volume is a successful gathering between two covers of the currently acceptable social practices employed by Catholics of taste in the United States.

Rarely cloying, never servile, written with the calm balance of the esthetician, the decorous style and genuine content provide interesting reading for the thumbing browser as well as facesaving information for anyone living in a world where people gather in common courtesy and social propriety.

What entertainment is proper following a First Communion? An ordination?
What are the social and spiritual obligations of a confirmation sponsor?
How long should a Catholic widow wear mourning?
What is the proper form for a Catholic wedding invitation?
What would be a suitable gift for someone entering a religious order?
Who must be invited to a First Solemn Mass?

Parents, guidance counselors, and all who are concerned with helping young people to attain spiritual and social maturity will find invaluable the chapters which treat of the home life of Catholics, manners and guidance for small children, sub-teens, and teenagers.

Since the Church is often judged, not by her precepts, but by the way her adherents live up to or ignore them, *American Catholic Etiquette* bids fair to enable Catholics to behave in a manner that is wholly Christian and socially acceptable in all aspects of ordinary life.

As a tasteful holiday gift for yourself, for that young family down the block, for the proverbial friend who has everything, this latest selection of the Thomas More Book Club will lend handy reference and handsome finesse to every family's bookshelf.

Editor's Note: Mr. John J. Fritscher (Jack Fritscher), who reviews *American Catholic Etiquette*, is a Josephinum theology student assigned to the diocese of Honolulu, Hawaii.

The present review is the third in a series of reviews tailored for the American Catholic family.

©1961, 2002 Jack Fritscher