

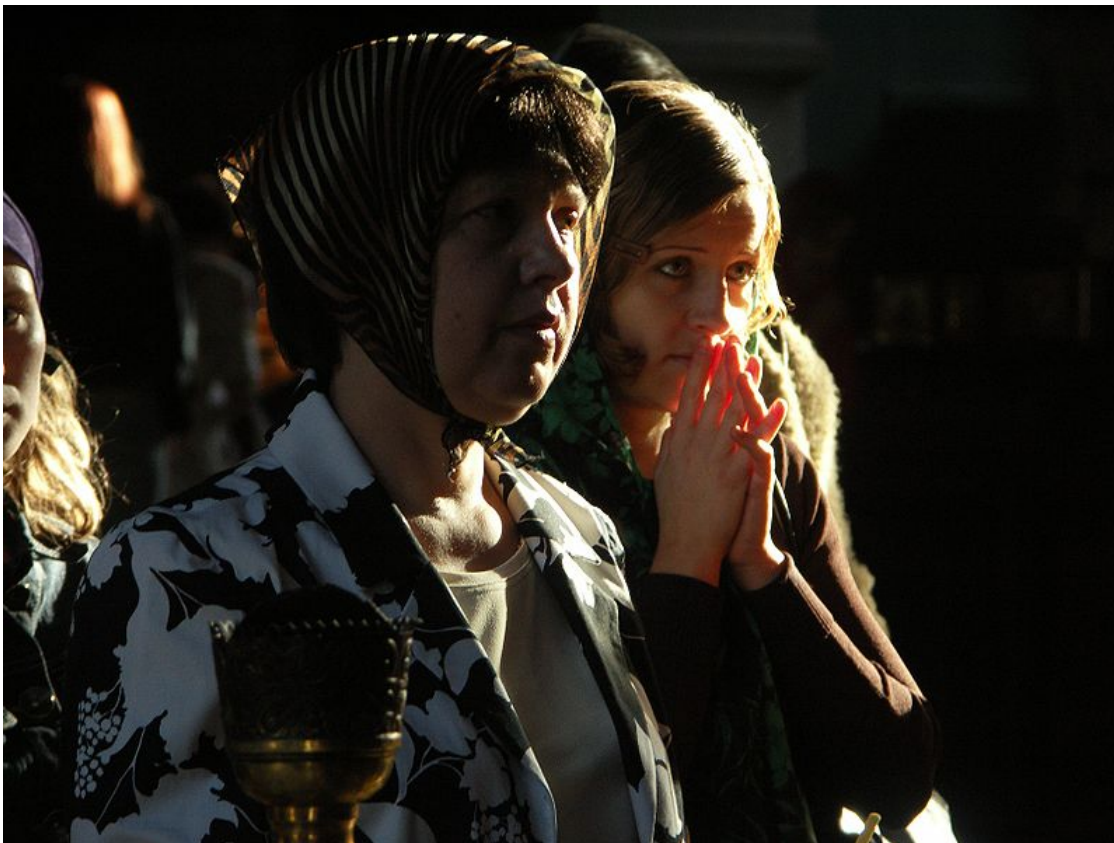
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Proper Attire in the House of God (Abbot Tryphon)

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The Church is our home, a place where we should feel comfortable, and at ease. It is also God's house and is a temple set aside for worship of the Holy Trinity. Although times have changed and we have become a very casual society, this attitude can not be allowed to influence how we dress to worship God.



Our way of dressing for church should reflect our desire to offer our very best to Christ. Just as we want to act in ways that demonstrate the centrality of Christ in our lives, our dress should show forth the modesty that is befitting a Christian.

Just as we take special care to dress for formal social occasions, or job interviews, how much more important it is to show our respect for God's house. If we were

invited to the wedding of our boss's daughter, we'd make sure to show respect to our employer by dressing our best. Does God deserve anything less?

We should wear clothes that are modest and befitting a Christian, especially when worshiping in God's house. In our monastery's temple, we keep the ancient practice of removing our shoes before entering, recalling God's direction to Moses "... take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you are is holy ground". We ask that no one wear shorts or tee shirts when entering the holy grounds of the monastery, and, as is proper in all Orthodox churches, ask visitors to avoid the distractions that come with slogans on clothing, or «showy» clothing that is best reserved for elegant events.



Both men and women should avoid wearing clothing that can be distracting to other worshipers. Just as we want to keep our focus on the divine services, so too we must not be the cause of the distraction for our fellow Christians. Christ should be the focus of our worship, not our personal outfits. Church is not the place to show off the latest fashion, nor the results of the fitness center.

Just as it is Orthodox custom that men remove their hats upon entering the Church,

women, throughout the history of the Church, have worn head coverings. The idea that this pious, biblical custom be seen as an antiquated or sexist practice, should be foreign to our Orthodox mindset. This tradition is not intended as an insult to women but as a great compliment. The scriptures refer to a woman's hair as her "crowning glory", and the covering of her head as an act of humility. Throughout Christian history, modest believing women chose not to allow their beauty to distract others from the glory of God and the beauty of His house.

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