

Attire of an Orthodox Christian Layperson

In a world of pluralistic expressions, also in the clothing one wears, it is important to stress how an Orthodox Christian expresses his or her faith and thus indirectly gives outward witness to the faith.

Overall, modesty in dress is an individual act of will, a deflection of unwanted attention rather than an active attempt to attract others, whose motives and thoughts, if directly inspired by immodesty, become a grave matter of complicit responsibility.

As with any healthy guidelines, Orthodox attire harmonizes with nature, common sense and religious conviction. With this in mind, men and women should adhere to the following principles and guidelines:

First, clothing should conceal rather than reveal the figure. Secondly, clothing should provide sufficient coverage for chest and arms. Transparent or flesh-toned clothing is hence inappropriate.

Attire for Men

Traditionally, many Orthodox men wear beards and/or long hair, but it is not contrary to the Orthodox way of life to be clean-shaven and/or wear shorter hair. Popular hairstyles and coloring is however discouraged, as it is a sign of adherence to the world's vogue rather than the kingdom of God. For the same reason, piercing, wearing earrings and tattooing are inappropriate if not contrary to Holy Orthodoxy. During worship and liturgical functions, men ought to observe professional standards: dress shirt and jacket or sweater (which may be omitted in warmer weather). It is needless to say that athletic wear, sneakers, open-toed shoes, ripped or stained clothing should not be worn, especially in church out of respect for the holiness of the place.

Attire for Women

Orthodox women should exercise modesty in all things, including the use of cosmetics and hair styling. Wearing no cosmetics is encouraged. Popular hairstyles and coloring is however discouraged, as it is a sign of adherence to the world's vogue rather than the kingdom of God. For the same reason, piercing, wearing earrings and tattooing are inappropriate if not contrary to Holy Orthodoxy. During worship, women should wear conservative skirts or dresses, which easily cover the knee, even while seated. All clothing should adhere to traditional standards of Orthodox modesty. It is needless to say that athletic wear, sneakers, open-toed shoes, ripped or stained clothing should not be worn, especially in church out of respect for the holiness of the place. Traditionally, Orthodox women wear skirts or dresses and a headscarf, especially during Services. This is encouraged, but not mandated in the west. Thus, it is still acceptable when women wear dress pants and a hat or no head covering.