Modesty Rules for Women

By Mary’s Little Remnant

“Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh.”

(Philippians 4:5)

Regarding modesty, there are three classes of women: non-Catholic women, Catholic laywomen, and Catholic religious women; and each has its own rules for minimum modesty. These are minimum rules; for instance, some religious orders have different rules of dress. These rules apply to females of all ages. Women who desire to look like men commit a mortal sin against the natural law and are doubly guilty if they carry out that desire by looking like a man. If Catholic women keep the Blessed Virgin Mary as a role model for modesty, they will have no problem with modesty in dress. They will not be an occasion of sin for others or a source of embarrassment or shame. Be Marylike by being modest—be modest by being Marylike.

**Parts of a woman that can never be shown** are from just above the cleavage to the knee inclusive, excluding the arms. Modesty demands that clothing must conceal and not reveal parts of a woman that can never be shown.

**Pants or shorts**, as a general rule, are not allowed to be worn as outer garments by Catholic women. When necessary, Catholic women can wear pants as undergarments under modest dresses or skirts to aid modesty when climbing ladders, hiking, riding horse or bike, etc. Non-Catholic women are allowed to wear as outer garments baggy, non-formfitting pants or shorts that cover the knees.

**Dresses or blouses** that show cleavage in any position are immodest. Catholic laywomen are under the additional rule of wearing dresses or blouses that are cut no deeper than two inches beneath the pit of the throat; and for Catholic religious women, no deeper than the base of the pit of the throat. Halter, strapless, and thin-strapped dresses or blouses are immodest. Backless and deep-cut back dresses are immodest. Modest cuts for backs of dresses or blouses must meet the minimum rule for the front of the dress or blouse.

**Arms** of non-Catholic women can be exposed. However, the arms of Catholic laywomen must be covered to but not including the elbow. Catholic religious women must have full-length sleeves. In work situations where full-length sleeves would present a problem (such as washing dishes), sleeves may be rolled up to the three-quarter length, but always well below the elbow.

**Skirts or dresses** that do not cover the knees in all positions are immodest. Catholic laywomen are under the additional rule of wearing skirts or dresses no shorter than half way between the knee and ankle; and for Catholic religious women, no shorter than three quarters past the knee to the ankle. Slits in skirts or dresses must not expose parts of a woman that can never be shown, the same applies to buttoned skirts and dresses.

**Fabrics** that are transparent, laces, nets, organdy, nylon, etc., are immodest unless sufficient backing is added. Flesh-colored fabrics when used to blend in with the flesh are immodest.
Garments that are formfitting are immodest. Garments with loose-fitting sleeves or necklines are immodest if in any position they show parts of a woman that can never be shown.

Veils that are not transparent must be worn by Catholic women when praying with others or when praying alone in front of an altar or other holy place designated for prayer. For Catholic laywomen the veil must cover all of the hair except for the hair in front (on the forehead). For Catholic religious women the veil must cover all of the hair and be worn at all times outside of the home and also in the privacy of the home when praying the Divine Office or praying in front of an altar or other holy place designated for prayer.

Churchwear for non-Catholic women who are visiting a Catholic church or attending a sermon must at least meet the modesty rules for Catholic laywomen.

Catechumens must at least meet the modesty rules for Catholic laywomen.

Sleepwear follows the other rules on modesty for each class, with the exception that Catholic religious women can wear sleeves to the elbow and no head covering.

Perfume and perfumed items are allowed for Catholic laywomen but must not be overwhelming or pagan. (But when visiting Mary’s Little Ranch or House, perfume is not permitted.) Catholic religious women must not wear perfume.

Makeup can be used by Catholic laywomen but must be hardly noticeable. Catholic religious women must not use makeup.

Hairstyles must not be masculine or ostentatious. Catholic women are not allowed to dye or highlight their hair. Catholic religious women must not nourish their hair and can wear their hair short, which is not masculine because it is covered in public.

Fingernails must not be colored, and the white of the nails must be no longer than one-eighth inch. Catholic religious women must not have nails longer than one-sixteenth inch.

Jewelry must not be ostentatious, pagan, heretical, or immoral. Only one piercing and earring is allowed per ear, but all other body piercing is forbidden. Catholic religious women are only allowed to wear sacramentals, religious jewelry, and watches (but no earrings).

Tattoos and body painting are forbidden. Tattoos previously done must be removed or hidden if they cannot be removed.

“In like manner women also in decent apparel:
adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety.”
(1Timothy 2:9)

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