



October 2025



Catholic Re-Veiling

Why veiling is a growing trend in the Catholic Church

By Lauren Palmer

Veiling is a woman's tradition of covering her head with a veil, mantilla, or other form of head covering during worship. Prior to the Second Vatican Council—also known as “Vatican II”—women in the Catholic Church were required to cover their heads during Mass. Reforms adopted during Vatican II aimed to make the Church more relevant in an increasingly secularized world, and those reforms included lifting the veiling requirement. Since that time, the practice of veiling has largely gone by the wayside, with the exception of an occasional Easter bonnet.

However, in recent years, there has been an uptick in women covering their heads in some churches, especially in those that are considered to be more theologically conservative. Depending on the parish, you may see just a few women veiling or entire rows embracing the practice. Attend any Catholic festival these days and chances are you will see a table of women selling veils.

Veiling in Practice

It sounds self-explanatory, but there are various ways to veil during Mass. When veiling was required by the Church, the veil was more commonly a small circular piece of cloth that only covered the top of a woman's head and was pinned at the crown. In modern practice, women typically wear a simple veil of fabric that is pinned to the top of the head and falls down around the shoulders. The veil does not typically cover the woman's face.

Unlike other faith traditions, such as Islam, where

the goal of a veil or hijab is to cover the woman's hair, Catholic veiling has no such requirement. Oftentimes the veil chosen by Catholic women is made of lace, so their hair is still fully visible, and the veil is simply meant to represent reverence and modesty. Additionally, Catholic veiling is typically only done during Mass or times of worship and is not worn daily like in other religious traditions.

Connecting to Mass

From interviews conducted with Catholics in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the number one reason that women are veiling is that it gives them a sense of identity. For many Catholic women, wearing a veil is a way to proclaim their commitment to Catholic beliefs during a church service. It also gives them a sense of belonging and shared identity within their parish as they feel connected to other women participating in the practice. Several of the women who veil said that at first they were unsure about it. They did not necessarily want to stand out if hardly anyone else in their parish was doing it. A group of women at one parish started to embroider and customize veils for other members as a way to help women feel more comfortable in making the decision to veil.

Some women use veiling as a tool to help them further connect to Mass. Veiling appears to be especially popular among younger women, particularly younger mothers. Most of the women observed veiling at Mass in Fort Wayne are between the ages of 20–45. Their lives are devoted to their children, and childcare is often their main focus, even during Mass. One woman described

wearing a veil as “putting on blinders.” It reminds her to block out the distractions around her (which can be difficult to do as a mother) and concentrate on Mass. She said that when she puts on her veil, it signals to herself and her children that it is time to shift from the outside world to the service. “It blocks out everything else around me that is not important and I’m able to focus solely on the altar,” she said. When her veil goes on, it is just her and God.

One woman said that she started veiling by accident. One day she was nursing during Mass and her baby kept pulling down the cloth she was using to cover them. She eventually became frustrated and placed the blanket over her head. She said that in doing this it seemed like her baby calmed, and she was able to focus more fully on what the priest was saying. After this experience, she decided that veiling would be beneficial to her spiritual life, and she has been veiling at Mass ever since. Her three-year-old daughter even joins her in veiling now.

A Universal Trend?

While some women see veiling as another way to

embrace Catholic traditions, its popularity—and the likelihood to abandon other modern practices—is not necessarily widespread across congregations. It seems that veiling has caught on in more conservative churches, but its uptake in more liberal churches is much rarer. A member of a well-known liberal parish in Indianapolis, for example, said she rarely, if ever, sees women veiling, and the handful of times she has observed it, that woman was visiting and not a member or regular attender of the parish.

The parishes that are restoring traditions from a pre-Vatican II era are mostly conservatively aligned. The churches are adopting disciplines like veiling or conducting services in Latin in an effort to deepen spiritual connection and reverence during Mass. Yet, these efforts are not always accessible or welcoming to visitors or all members of a congregation, which is why liberal parishes remain unlikely to turn back to them en masse. As more women continue the trend to veiling as an outward sign of devotion and an inward move to concentration, it remains to be seen whether Catholics across ideological lines will adopt the practice, even without it being required.



Lauren Palmer graduated from Marian University with a double major in Spanish and French. She received her Master of Arts in Teaching Spanish from Indiana University Indianapolis. In the past, Lauren has taught as an adjunct professor of Spanish at both Marian University and Indiana University Indianapolis. Lauren has worked as a graduate assistant on Religion and Urban Culture 2.0. Lauren is currently working on her dissertation in the American Studies Ph.D. program at Indiana University Indianapolis, focusing on the state of global learning in Indiana.