

NATIONAL CATHOLIC  
REGISTER

DAILY NEWS

## Here Comes the Catholic Bride

**April 22 feature on modest dress choices.**

BY LORI HADACEK CHAPLIN

| Posted 4/28/12 at 9:50 AM

After 10 years of the strapless dress dominating the wedding scene, it may be that fashion is finally catching up to what many Catholic brides are looking for in a wedding dress — individuality, style and elegant modesty. Kate Middleton's long-sleeved wedding gown was the catalyst that showed the world how a bride can be both beautiful and modest.

"It was the perfect storm. Brides were looking for something different, and designers were ready for a change," says Josie Daga, founder of the resale-wedding-dress site PreOwnedWeddingDresses.com. "This beautiful, iconic princess wears a dress with sleeves, and now you see so many more brides in non-strapless gowns."

Though gowns with sleeves are the hottest trend, Daga doesn't think American women will embrace long sleeves like British designers and brides have; she predicts Americans will be more likely to wear pretty straps, cap or short sleeves. Strapless dresses paired with a stunning bolero or shrug is also a trend, she says.

### Timeless and Personal

Kate Fischer, who was married at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Front Royal, Va., this past November, wore a long-sleeved, lace bolero over her strapless gown. She wanted to appear before the altar with both modesty and elegance. "It was important for me to cover my arms in front of the Blessed Sacrament as a sign of respect for the Lord," she says. She also wanted her dress to have that timeless look of Kate Middleton's dress.

Fischer preferred the look of the dress when she donned the bolero: "My mom pointed out that with the bolero the attention was brought to my face, rather than to the dress." Her look was also made special because her mom had sewed a small piece of lace from her wedding dress to the inside of the back of the bolero, so that Kate's back would be completely covered.

According to dress expert Daga, a big trend in weddings currently is personalization. "Everything about the wedding is personalized: Brides want their weddings to be unique. The dress gives the bride a chance to showcase herself and her own personality."

Laura Hepler, who recently said her wedding vows at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Fredericksburg, Va., personalized her wedding by wearing her mom's 1979 wedding dress. "I attach a lot of meaning to wearing the same gown that my mother wore on the day that she received the sacrament of marriage," she says. "My parents have been married for almost 33 years, and I look up to their example of sacrificial love." The gown originally had '70s-looking sleeves, but by altering them to cap sleeves, the dress was made to look timeless and one-of-a-kind.

### Modern Modesty

Hepler says that the dress fit her personality, and it was important to her to look beautiful and modest: "I have never felt comfortable in a strapless dress. The last thing I wanted to feel on my wedding day was self-conscious. It is my opinion that dresses with more fabric on top are not only more modest, but, oftentimes, look much classier."

When choosing a wedding gown, brides should ask themselves, "Will this dress stand the test of time?" A bride wants to be able to always treasure her wedding photos.



Craig Spiering, a professional wedding photographer from Front Royal, Va., says, "I don't want my clients to cringe when they look at their wedding album in 10 or 20 years due to a faddish photographic style. I try to focus on a classic, tasteful, quality exposition, and I think the same should go for the bride-to-be when choosing a dress and hairstyle."

Spiering believes that modesty is timeless: "Though a young lady may feel quite attractive or fashionable in a strapless dress now, she might not be comfortable showing those same pictures to her children in 15 years."

### **Bride: Symbol of the Church**

Brides should not only take into account fashion trends, but also that they'll be standing at the altar.

Father Francisco Flores, pastor of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in Caldwell, Idaho, says so much emphasis is placed on the bride at weddings because she symbolizes the Church, who is the Bride of Christ.

"In the Book of Revelation, St. John speaks of the bride who has prepared herself for the marriage of the Lamb, which has already begun. In the image from Revelation, the bride is adorned in clean white linen, depicting the purity and newness given to her by her groom, who is Our Lord, and the bride is the Church.

"With this in mind, how can a bride desire to be anything but beautiful, pure and modest?"

*Lori Hadacek Chaplin writes from Idaho.*

*See her Pinterest ([Pinterest.com/lorichaplin/](http://Pinterest.com/lorichaplin/))*

*page for demure wedding, bridesmaid and mother-of-the-bride dress ideas.*