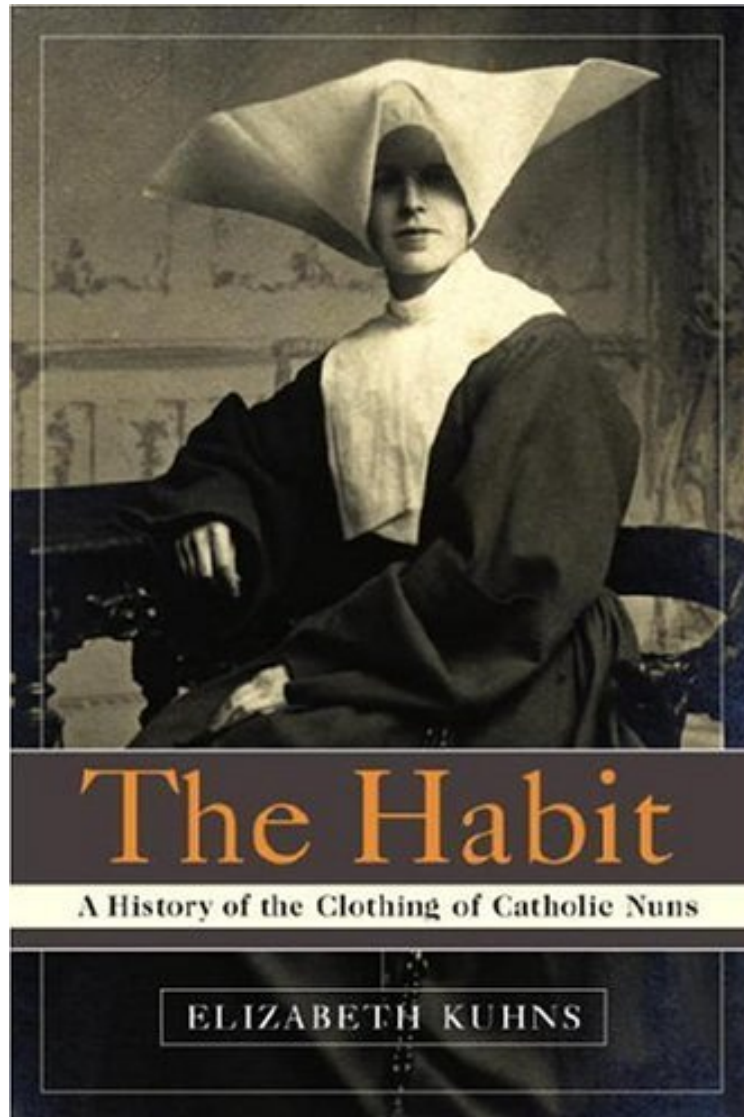


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The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns

Elizabeth Kuhns

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Elizabeth Kuhns : The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Habit: A History of the Clothing of Catholic Nuns:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I'd like to see the success of the traditional Religious women ...By TRAM1951Some interesting details on the development of the religious women's traditional dress. The author spends considerable time describing the commonness (everyone dressed much alike due to poverty or the sumptuary laws). She seems to equate this all-peasants-dressed-alike as the precursor to the habit. This is very simplistic history and, I don't think, valid.The author also raises the nearly universally valid point that religious women's Orders that have not

abandoned the whole habit are much stronger in recruits than the leftist, more feminist-centered groups. This has been proved true and the reformed Orders can only oppose it by personal attack on the psychologies or motives of their veiled/habited sisters. (A shameful practice!) This book is about ten years old now. I'd like to see the success of the traditional Religious women revisited with this last decade investigated. I'm reminded of the wisdom of a fine old Friar who dealt regularly with Sisters -- especially those groups in conflict over their Community's future. He said: "Historically, orders, male or female, have disappeared for one of two reasons. Either they have completed the Lord's work; or they stopped doing the Lord's work." I fear it's too late for the majority of them.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. After attending Vespers at my parish, where a group ...By ARGAfter attending Vespers at my parish, where a group of Dominicans attended and spoke on Mercy led to a conversation with my mother about what kind of nuns had taught her in school because the habits were similar, I became interested in different styles. Being in my 30's, habits aren't something I see everyday to have a basis of comparison. Very interesting history. It is an older book so it is missing a decade or two of history, but really engaging nonetheless.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great History of Women Religious Through Their GarbBy WildeoneThis is a wonderfully researched book about the history of religious habits worn by consecrated women in the Catholic Church. Starting with the early Church "Mothers" and their attire, this book delves into the evolution of the religious garb most people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, were accustomed to still seeing in the 19th and 20th century. It also goes into detail about the trend towards not wearing what had become an outmoded way of dress (as some have felt) to identify themselves as women religious in the later part of the 20th century. It is obviously a discussion with pros and cons but this book gives a solid historic background to the issue. A great addition to today's growing collection of books being written about women religious.

Curiosity about nuns and their distinctive clothing is almost as old as Catholicism itself. The habit intrigues the religious and the nonreligious alike, from medieval maidens to contemporary schoolboys, to feminists and other social critics. The first book to explore the symbolism of this attire, *The Habit* presents a visual gallery of the diverse forms of religious clothing and explains the principles and traditions that inspired them. More than just an eye-opening study of the symbolic significance of starched wimples, dark dresses, and flowing veils, *The Habit* is an incisive, engaging portrait of the roles nuns have and do play in the Catholic Church and in ministering to the needs of society. From the clothing seen in an eleventh-century monastery to the garb worn by nuns on picket lines during the 1960s, habits have always been designed to convey a specific image or ideal. The habits of the Benedictines and the Dominicans, for example, were specifically created to distinguish women who consecrated their lives to God; other habits reflected the sisters' desire to blend in among the people they served. The brown Carmelite habit was rarely seen outside the monastery wall, while the Flying Nun turned the white winged cornette of the Daughters of Charity into a universally recognized icon. And when many religious abandoned habits in the 1960s and '70s, it stirred a debate that continues today. Drawing on archival research and personal interviews with nuns all over the United States, Elizabeth Kuhns examines some of the gender and identity issues behind the controversy and brings to light the paradoxes the habit represents. For some, it epitomizes oppression and obsolescence; for others, it embodies the ultimate beauty and dignity of the vocation. Complete with extraordinary photographs, including images of the nineteenth century nuns' silk bonnets to the simple gray dresses of the Sisters of Social Service, this evocative narrative explores the timeless symbolism of the habit and traces its evolution as a visual reflection of the changes in society. From the Hardcover edition.