“This is a Holy place not a beach,” the priest scolded as those of us that were handed shawls clearly showed contempt. Many historical churches follow the strict dress code of no shorts or bare shoulders and The Church of Visitation in Ein Karem is no exception. Upon walking up to the gates, those of us that were exposing either too much leg or shoulders were told to cover up with shawls that a priest handed us before we would be allowed to enter.

While getting dressed that morning I put on jeans out of the expectation that we would be visiting churches but was told to go change after breakfast because it I would be too hot. Yet standing outside the gates to the church, trying to tie a shawl around my waist I was regretting my decision to do so.

While it was embarrassing to be called out on something of the sort I understood the Church’s position. While in this modern age wearing shorts or a tank top does not seem “indecent” to us, when visiting these historical sites it’s important to follow these traditions. People complain that they should be more lenient but that is not fair to the churches as that creates a fuzzy line as to what should be considered decent or not. If the rule is disregarded and people are let in with shorts, there is little that will stop people from trying to enter in bathing suits in the future. The Church is considered sacred and regardless of your religion or beliefs respecting that by compliance of the rules is vital in being a mature traveler and keeping a place such as The Church of Visitation a special place.