

The Things we use in our Worship

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Part II



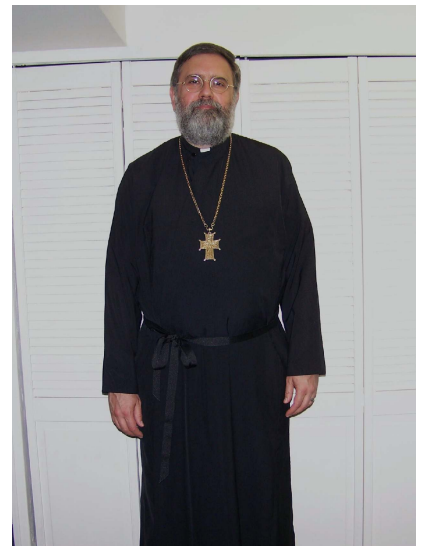
The next thing for us to examine is the **vestments**, the distinct dress worn by the clergy and their assistants. In Exodus ch. 28 we read God's instructions to Moses concerning his brother Aaron, who was to be priest for the people: "*And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.*" And the instructions go on at great length...

The use of vestments in Christian worship, like that of their Jewish prototypes, is based in the belief that the ministers of holy things should be vested in fine garments. The form and shape of the vestments as we know them, however, developed primarily from secular Roman garb. At first there was no distinctive dress for the clergy, but as Roman fashion changed, the generally conservative clergy retained what they had always worn.

For example, the basic garment is the **cassock**, which was the old ankle-length Roman tunic. When the Romans, under barbarian influence, began to wear knee-length tunics in the sixth century, the clergy retained the older fashion. It is not so much a vestment as ordinary street-dress for clergy, worn as a suit might be worn. It is typically black, signifying separation from the world, though it may be grey, blue, tan, or rarely white (for popes and priests living in the tropics).



The basic liturgical garment worn over the cassock (by clergy at the Daily Office and when not celebrating the Mass, and by acolytes at all services) is the **surplice**. From the Latin *superpelliceum* meaning "over a fur garment" it was worn by clergy in cold churches over their fur coats. Today it is the basic white liturgical garment. The nave, or main body of the church is spoken of as symbolic of the church in this world; the chancel around the



altar is said to be symbolic of the church in heaven and it is thus fitting that those who serve the Church, the Bride of Christ, should be garbed as St. John declares in the Book of Revelation (19:8) “*And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*” If the surplice is cut shorter it may be called a *cotta*.



Then we have the ***biretta***. It is not of ancient origin, but this clerical hat is spoken of by the 12th century. It may be worn on the way to and from the sacristy and worn outside when a hat is called for. It is customary for a clergyman to raise his biretta at the Name of Jesus, the name of Mary and the name of the saint whose feast day it is. It is typically black, with four corners and three fins (though a Doctor of Divinity in the exercise of his office may have a fourth fin) and it is surmounted by a pom-pom. It has fallen out of favor in many places and the pastor of St. Gregory’s only wears his biretta when the acolytes remember to hand it to him.

The final non-Eucharistic garment we have to discuss is the ***cope***. The Cope is worn by the priest at Solemn Vespers and Matins and in processions. It is a large cloak, semi-circular, open in the front and fastened with a clasp in the front, which derived from the ancient Roman cloak. It developed from the same source as the chasuble (which we will discuss in just a moment). The cope, strictly speaking, is not a Eucharistic garment, like the chasuble. This is why you will see the celebrant change from the cope to the chasuble after the *Asperges* and before the Mass begins. The cope was a common ceremonial garment by the 6th and 7th centuries and it symbolizes rule and authority, so it is worn by those who officiate, and in some cases by their chief assistants. It is typically made of the finest material.



The color scheme for vestments has been fixed for centuries in the West, but it is not ancient. The earliest written mention of the color of vestments comes from the 6th century and simply calls for White at Pascha and a darker red or brown at other times. By the 12th century we find that the Churches of Rome were using a scheme of white, red, violet, green and black - essentially the same pattern we use now, but there were local variations in the West well into the 19th century (for example, the use of blue in Advent or for Marian feasts).

White proclaims life and joy and innocence, the glory of the angels and the triumph of the saints. We use it on the great feasts of our Lord and His blessed Mother (Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, Annunciation...). We also use white on the feasts of those saints who were not martyrs.



Red speaks of the fire of the Holy Spirit and blood shed in witness, thus we use it for the Feast of Pentecost and on the feasts of martyrs.



Green, the color of life and growth, symbolizes hope - specifically the hope which accompanies our pilgrimage toward heaven - and we use it in the season after Epiphany and after Pentecost.



Violet, or purple, from ancient time symbolized royalty and power. As Christ has taught us the true meaning of these things, purple for us declares humility, sorrow for our sins, and fervent prayer - so we use purple in Advent, Pre-Lent, Lent, Vigils of some major feasts and on Ember Days (The Ember Days are a Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of fasting and prayer, and

may be times for ordinations, which have been kept from ancient times four times each year). We also use purple for hearing confessions and for times of blessing (such as the blessing of candles at Presentation, the blessing of ashes on Ash Wednesday, and the blessing of Palms on Palm Sunday). Purple is also used for the blessing of the font at Baptisms.

Black, the opposite of white, expresses death and the absence of life, it is the color of mourning and used for funerals and other services for the dead. While these are the basic five colors used, there are also two variations to mention.





Rose is properly thought of as a lighter shade of purple, and not pink. It is used on the fourth Sunday of Lent and the third Sunday of Advent - on both occasions the theme is joy and rejoicing and the tone of the fast is momentarily lightened.



Gold may take the place of white or red and is typically the finest set of vestments that a church possesses, reserved for the greatest celebrations. This particular chasuble is in the shape commonly referred to as a *fiddle-back* or Roman style and I will say more about that in a few minutes.

Now, on to the vestments themselves. When a priest begins to vest for mass he already has his cassock on. As I mentioned earlier, the cassock is not a vestment, but ordinary street dress. The priest is to wash his hands in preparation as he prays: *Give grace, O Lord, unto my hands and cleanse them from all stain, that I may serve thee with a clean mind and body...*



He then places the **amice** on his head. From the Latin word *amicire*, to cover; it is a square piece of linen, worn since the eighth century, that will help protect the vestments from any oil or sweat that might be on the priest's neck or hair. But of course it also has a symbolic meanings as well, as the voice is located in the neck and the amice symbolizes moderation of speech. There is a reference to this in the Western form for the ordination of a subdeacon, the first order that would wear a amice. The amice, according to some sources, symbolizes the blindfold which the Jews placed on Jesus as they mocked him before the crucifixion, but chiefly it symbolizes the helmet of salvation which St. Paul refers to in Ephesians, chapter 6. As he puts on the amice the minister prays: *Place, O Lord, the helmet of salvation upon my head, that I may repel the assaults of the enemy.*



He next puts on the **alb**, from the Latin *alba* - as it is a white vestment or robe symbolizing purity. The alb evolved from the old Roman under-tunic and has always been worn by the church's ministers. The prayer asks: *Purify me, O Lord, and cleanse my heart, that being made white in the blood of the lamb, I may enjoy everlasting bliss.*

The **cincture** or girdle is next, tied around the waist to keep everything (especially the stole) in place. The minister recalls its symbolism as he prays: *Gird me, O Lord, with the girdle*

of purity and quench within me all lustful desires, that I may be strengthened in chastity and self-control. This completes the basic underwear, worn by priests, deacons and subdeacons, and now we move on to the more elaborate vestments.



The **stole** is put on next. It evolved from the *oraria*, a neck cloth used for wiping the face and commonly waved at public events. This garment, carried by a servant over his left shoulder, became the distinctive garment of the deacon who continued to wear a folded cloth over his left shoulder as a sign that he was appointed to serve. Bishops and priests also wore the stole in later centuries (perhaps by the 8th or 9th), though the priest wears his crossed in front of his chest and the bishop or archimandrite wears his around his neck with both ends hanging straight down (his pectoral cross serving as the cross). The word *stole* comes from the Gallican *stola*. The stole is also worn when giving blessings and when hearing confessions. It symbolizes the yoke of Christ and serving in Christ's Name. It should have a cross in the center that is kissed before putting it on. The priest prays: *Give to me, O Lord, the robe of*

immortality which I lost by the transgression of my first parents, and although I am unworthy to enter into thy holy of holies, grant that I may attain everlasting blessedness.

If the priest, deacon or subdeacon is vesting immediately before Mass he puts the **maniple** on next (but waits to put it on if Matins or Vespers or a procession comes first - because it gets in the way). The word maniple comes from the Latin *mappa* or *mappula* - a small handkerchief or napkin. It is worn over the left arm, but was originally carried in the left hand, as shown in early Christian and pagan monuments. Some also think of it resembling a towel over a waiter's arm, as he is ready to serve. The maniple became a distinctively liturgical vestment and symbolizes sorrow for sin. The



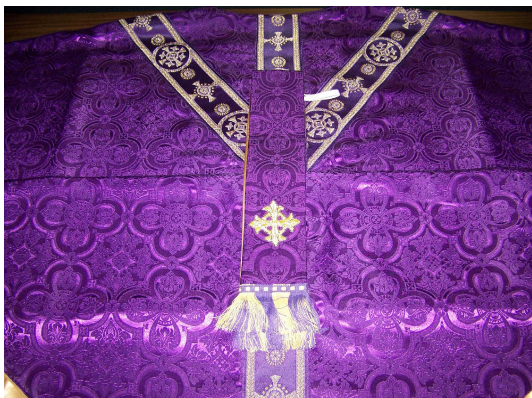
prayer asks: *Make me worthy, O Lord, to bear the burden of tears and sorrow, that with joy I may receive the fruit of my works.* The Roman Catholic Church abolished the maniple in 1969 but we retain its use.



The **chasuble** is derived from the old Roman outer cloak, or *casula* in Latin, meaning “little house”, as it is rather tent-shaped in appearance. In II Timothy 4, St. Paul mentioned leaving one behind in Troas and asks that it be brought to him. It was a common garment worn by all people - similar to the Spanish poncho. In time those in authority wore larger and more decorated versions and this evolved into the chasuble as we know it. The chasuble is symbolic of the seamless robe that was put on Christ before he was crucified and we note that it often has a plain stripe on the front representing the pillar where Christ was scourged and a cross on the back, representing the Cross of Christ and the cross that we are to bear (the arms of this cross are bent upward in imitation of Christ’s arms on the cross).

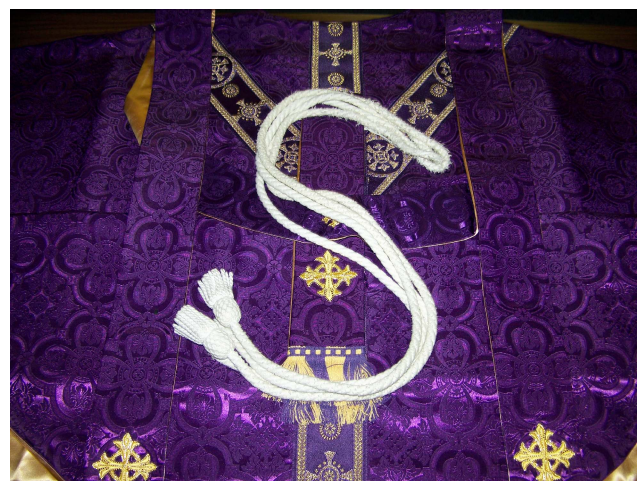


While the chasuble had been a tent-like garment, as more costly and stiff fabrics were used, over the centuries the cloth at the arms was cut away and eventually we find the so-called **fiddle-back** shape that was common by the baroque period in the West. As he puts the chasuble on the priest prays: *O Lord, who hast said, My yoke is easy and my burden is light, grant me so to bear it that I may attain thy heavenly grace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.* Then after the chasuble is in place the amice is pushed back to form a collar.



Now that we have seen each of the vestments as they are put on, we should mention that they are prepared for the priest by being laid out in reverse order. The chasuble is laid out first...

Then the maniple is placed upon it forming an “I”...



Then the stole is laid out in the shape of an “H”...

Then the cincture is laid out in the form of an “S”, giving us the IHS, used from ancient times as a contraction of *Jesus Christos*, and calling to mind the *In hoc signo* we know from the life of St. Constantine.



The alb is laid on top of this...

And finally the amice.

Instead of the chasuble, the deacon puts on his *dalmatic*. This fuller version of the tunic with shorter sleeves originated in Dalmatia and was introduced to Rome in the second century. Pope St. Sylvester declared that it would be the garment for deacons in the 4th century.



The *tunicle*, worn by the subdeacon, while originally derived from the older tunic, became virtually identical to the dalmatic, except that the tunicle has one or no *clavi* or stripes across the garment, while the dalmatic has two. The Roman Catholic Church abolished the order of subdeacon in 1972, and with it the tunicle, but again, we continue to maintain the older usage.



The final garment to mention here is the *humeral veil*, a long rectangle of fabric used by the priest to hold the Blessed Sacrament in blessing or procession (as on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday). It is also used by the Subdeacon as he holds the paten at High Mass from the Offertory until after the Our Father. Its use dates from the 8th century or before and shows our reverence in holding holy things.

Continued in part III.