

Orantes

Newsletter of the Office for Divine Worship
of the Diocese of Worcester

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LITURGICAL VESTURE

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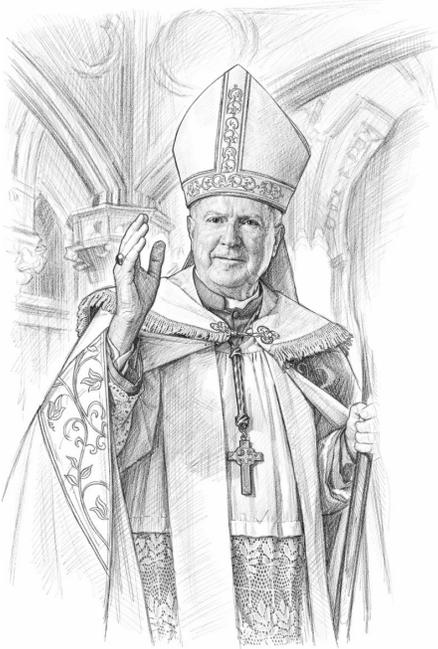
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From the start, *Orantes* has sought to serve as a practical liturgical resource for pastors and their collaborators. In this issue, we begin a new series examining the sacred objects treated in Chapter V of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, under the heading “The Arrangement and Ornamentation of Churches for the Celebration of the Eucharist.”

Sacred Vestments are among the most immediately visible elements of the liturgical celebration. They indicate roles, inform us of the season or character of the rite and contribute to the solemnity and beauty of the celebration. This issue opens with an explanation of “The Purpose and Character of Sacred Vesture” (page 00). This is followed by reflections on the vestment common to all the baptized, “The Alb” (page 00), “The Vestments Proper to the Priest” (page 00) and “The Vestments Proper to the Deacon” (page 00).

The Purpose and Character of Sacred Vesture

Clothing helps people know who we are. Without uniforms we would not be able to tell who the firefighter or policeman was, which one was the doctor, the chef or the airplane pilot. Clothing is a signifier of someone's identity and role.



Saint Paul famously reminds us that the Body of Christ is made up of people with “different kinds of spiritual gifts” who perform “different forms of service,”¹ each of which exist solely for the building up of the Body of Christ.²

Thus the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council note that “in liturgical celebrations, each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy.”³

“This diversity of offices is shown outwardly in the celebration of the Eucharist by the diversity of sacred vestments, which must therefore be a sign of the function proper to each minister.”⁴

Thus, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal calls for the priest to wear an alb, stole and chasuble, while the deacon wears an alb, stole and dalmatic.

The guidelines of the Diocese of Worcester for lay liturgical ministers calls for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to “always be dressed in a manner consistent with the dignity of their role,” while noting

¹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6.

² 1 Corinthians 14:26.

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC], no. 28.

⁴ Cf. *Book of Blessings* [BB], no. 1070.

that they “may wear an alb or ordinary clothing, depending on local custom.”⁵

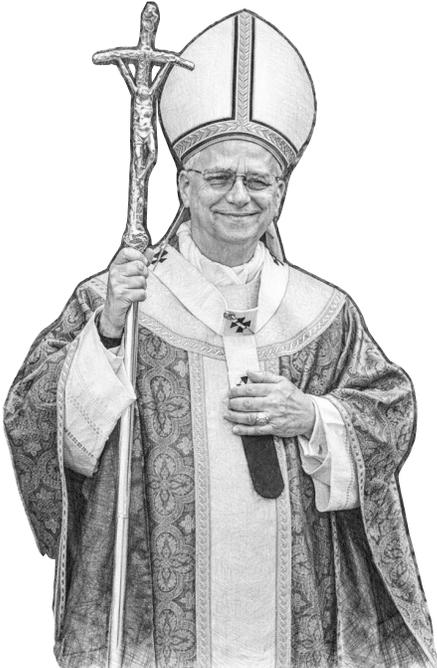
Lectors, likewise, “should always be dressed in a manner consistent with the dignity of their role and may wear an alb or ordinary clothing, depending on local custom.”⁶

Finally, Altar Servers “may wear an alb or other suitable vesture or other appropriate or dignified clothing depending on local custom.⁷ All servers should wear the same liturgical vesture.”⁸

In addition to the differentiation of roles, “sacred vestments should also contribute to the decoration of the sacred action itself.”⁹ The Bishops of the United States expanded upon this statement in *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*, noting that “vestments worn by the ministers should contribute to the beauty of the liturgical celebration and reflect the dignity of the sacred rites, rather than the personality of the individual minister.”¹⁰

Thus Pope Benedict XVI presciently taught that “the liturgy is not a matter of ‘what you like’ or ‘what I like.’ It is the Church’s living form, which grows and develops, yet always remains itself.”¹¹

Like the design of the churches in which the liturgy is celebrated, liturgical vesture reflects a wide diversity of styles and forms. This grows from the Council’s



⁵ *Guidelines for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Worcester* (2020), no. 12; Cf. GIRM, no. 339.

⁶ *Guidelines for Lectors in the Diocese of Worcester* (2020), no. 10; Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [GIRM], no. 339.

⁷ Cf. GIRM, no. 339..

⁸ *Guidelines for Altar Servers in the Diocese of Worcester* (2020), no. 8; Cf. GIRM, no. 339.

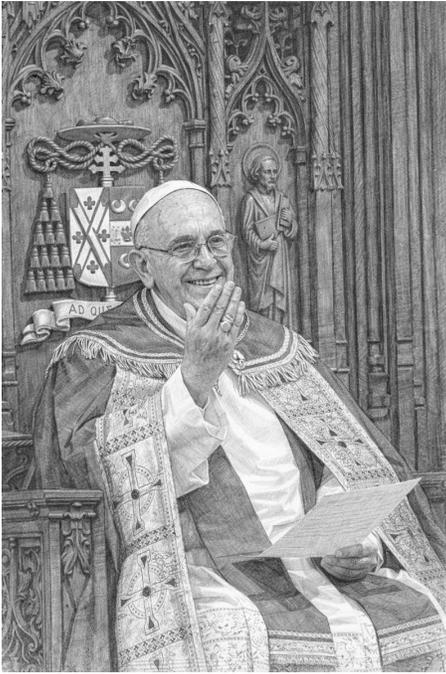
⁹ GIRM, no. 335.

¹⁰ USCCB, *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship* [BLS], no. 123.

¹¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (2020), page ??.

insistence that “The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own... she admits styles from every period... provided that they promote the faith and piety of the faithful.”¹²

Vestments, like all sacred art, must “by their very nature, [be] directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands”¹³ and “should be made of material that is in keeping with the dignity of the sacred action and the role of the minister.”¹⁴



GIRM, no. 399 notes that “The beauty of a vestment should derive from its material and form rather than from ornate decoration,”¹⁵ a point expanded on by the Bishops of the United States:

The beauty of vestments derives from their simplicity and dignity, from their design and materials, rather than from lavish ornamentation.¹⁶

The General Instruction continues:

It is fitting that the beauty and nobility of each vestment not be sought in an abundance of overlaid ornamentation, but rather in the material used and in the design. Ornamentation on vestments should, moreover, consist of figures, that is, of images or symbols, that denote sacred use, avoiding anything unbecoming to this.¹⁷

¹² SC, no. 123.

¹³ SC, no. 122.

¹⁴ GIRM, no. 337.

¹⁵ GIRM, no. 339.

¹⁶ BLS, no. 125.

¹⁷ GIRM, no. 344.

The Color of Sacred Vesture

From the first use of liturgical vesture in the fourth century, there is a clear preference for the wearing of more ornate or precious vesture on more solemn occasions, but little indication of a standardized system of color. It is not until the High Middle Ages that symbolic meanings are associated with particular colors. From the start, white would be associated with joy and purity, red with martyrdom and the Holy Spirit, black with mourning and penance, and green with life and growth, eventually resulting in an increasingly standardized pattern of liturgical colors, finally codified by the Roman Missal of Pius V. In the centuries that followed, the Roman system remained largely unchanged, with modest developments: the optional use of rose on Gaudete and Laetare Sundays, the admission of gold or silver on especially solemn occasions, and a gradual shift away from black toward violet or white in funeral liturgies.



In our time, *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* describes the use of color in sacred vestments as an effective expression “the specific character of the mysteries of faith to be celebrated or to a sense of Christian life’s passage through the course of the liturgical year.”¹⁸ Thus, the colors used are:¹⁹

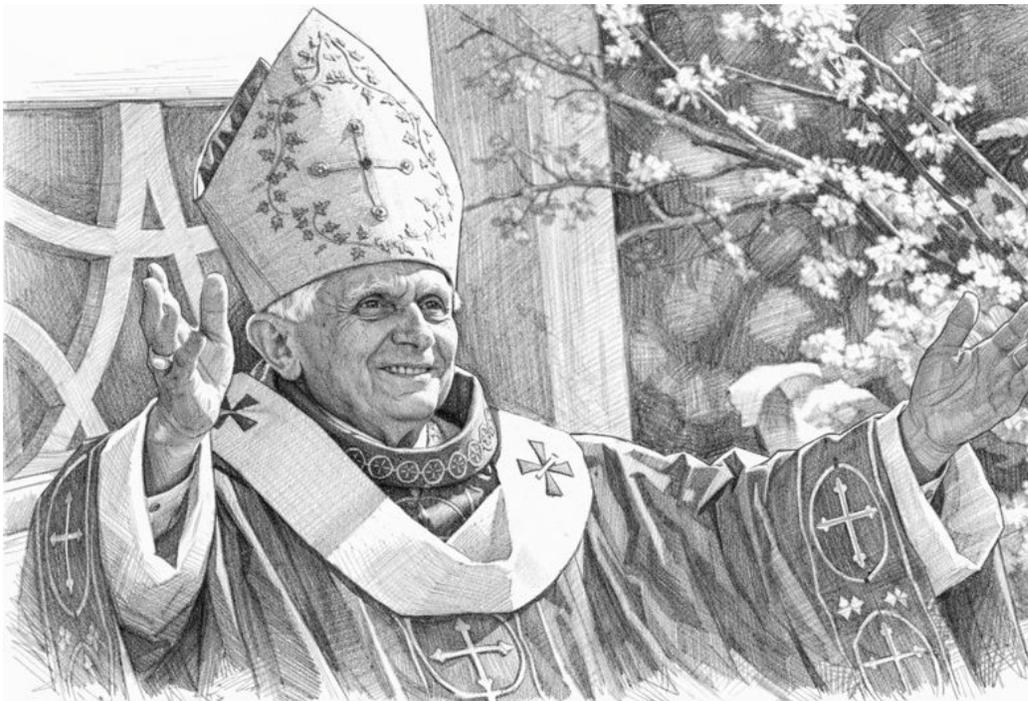
¹⁸ GIRM, no. 345.

¹⁹ GIRM, no. 346.

| COLOR | Used on the Offices and Feasts of.... |
|---|--|
| WHITE | Easter Time and Christmas Time; on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity; and furthermore on celebrations of the Lord other than of his Passion, celebrations of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Holy Angels, and of Saints who were not Martyrs; on the Solemnities of All Saints (1 November) and of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (24 June); and on the Feasts of St. John the Evangelist (27 December), of the Chair of St. Peter (22 February), and of the Conversion of St. Paul (25 January). |
| RED | on Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion and on Friday of Holy Week, on Pentecost Sunday, on celebrations of the Lord's Passion, on the "birthday" feast days of Apostles and Evangelists, and on celebrations of Martyr Saints. |
| GREEN | Ordinary Time. |
| VIOLET or PURPLE | Advent and Lent. It may also be worn in Offices and Masses for the Dead. |
| BLACK | may be used, where it is the practice, in Masses for the Dead. |
| ROSE | may be used, where it is the practice, on Gaudete Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and on Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent). |
| more precious, sacred vestments of whatever color | On more solemn days |

Colors Worn at Special Masses²⁰

| Special Masses | COLOR |
|--------------------------|---|
| Ritual Masses | in their proper color, in white, or in a festive color |
| Masses for Various Needs | the color proper to the day or the time of year or in violet if they have a penitential character, for example, nos. 31, 33 or 38 |
| Votive Masses | the color suited to the Mass itself or even in the color proper to the day or the time of the year |

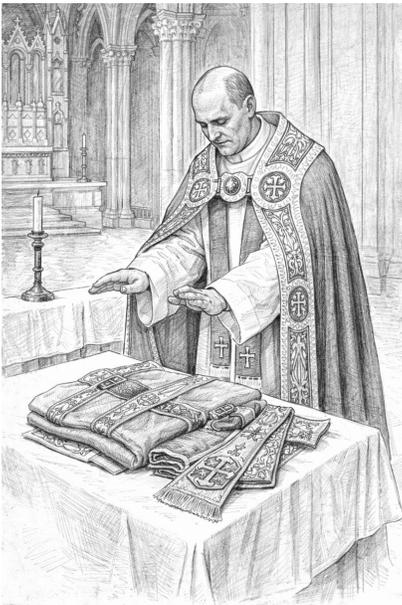


²⁰ GIRM, no. 347.

The Blessing and Care of Sacred Vestments

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal also reminds pastors²¹ vestments are to be blessed before being used according to the rite provided in Order for the Blessing of Articles for Liturgical Use in the Book Blessings, nos. 1341-1359. While this rite is used for the blessing of a variety of liturgical articles, a special blessing prayer is provided for liturgical vestments in nos. 1352 and 1358:

Blessed are you, O God,
for making your own Son
the eternal High Priest of the New Covenant
and for choosing your own brothers
to be the stewards of your mysteries.
May your ministers who use these vestments,
prepared for the celebration of the liturgy
and set apart for your blessing,
wear them with reverence
and honor them by the holiness of their lives.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Finally, it should be borne in mind that the continuing care of sacred vestments is “is an important sign of reverence for the liturgy and for the Church’s worship.”²² The storage of heavier vestments in drawers rather than on hangers, the regular cleaning of frequently worn albs, stoles and chasubles and the seasonal review of vesture for repairs are among such considerations.

²¹ GIRM, no. 335.

²² BLS - CHECK!!!

The Origins of Sacred Vesture

Without exception, Roman liturgical vestments have evolved from secular clothing in the Roman empire of the first centuries. With the institutionalization of Christendom in the fourth century, many of these secular antecedents are adapted for clerical and liturgical use, even as they are replaced by different fashions in civic use. By Carolingian times, Amalarius of Metz (9th century) describes in detail the symbolic meanings which have come to be associated with each vestment, around the same time as Roman Vesting Prayers begin to appear in the Frankish–Gallican *Ordines*. The *Roman Missal* of Pius V (1570 AD) codifies their use and meaning.

Current post-conciliar teaching and legislation, conscious of the Second Vatican Council’s call to “a noble simplicity,”²³ fixes the use and meaning of sacred vesture, seeking to make all the elements of the Sacred Liturgy at the same time faithful to tradition, pastorally intelligible and spiritually fruitful for the Church of in our time.

EUROPA. MITTELALTER



²³ SC, no. 34.

The Alb

The base garment of everyday dress in ancient Rome was a simple tunic with openings for the head and two arms. The upper class tunic was often white with sleeves. More prestigious or elder men would wear a tunic reaching to the feet (*tunica talaris*).

The alb is first mentioned in the *Mystagogical Catechesis* of Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (†397) who describes how the newly baptized were clothed in white garments.

“As a visible sacramental sign (*signum visibile*) of what has taken place invisibly in the soul...you were clothed in white garments (*vestes candidas*) to show that you have put off the garment of sin and put on the chaste garments of innocence.”²⁴

It is notable that the baptismal garment is not only white (*albus*) but brilliantly white (*candidus*), the same word used for Christ’s garments in the transfiguration, thus implying the neophytes’ participation in the glory of his resurrection.

The alb’s use as a white garment by the clergy, especially at the liturgy, is first indicated by *Ordines Romani* of the early Middle Ages. In time, the baptismal garment comes to be adopted as the garment of all the baptized in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, white (*albus*) in color, and covering all secular clothing. The first indications of this are in a directive to deacons by the Council of Carthage (398 AD)²⁵ and Saint Jerome’s description of *candida vestis* as habitual clerical vesture.²⁶



²⁴ Saint Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*, VII, 34; Cf. Galatians 3:27.

²⁵ Council of Carthage IV, canon 41: “Let the deacon, use the alb only at the time of the oblation or of the reading.”

²⁶ Saint Jerome, *Epistula* 22, §27. “Let the whiteness of your garments signify the purity of your soul.”

By the seventh century, Saint Isidore of Seville (636 AD) describes the *alba* as the common liturgical vestment, symbolizing the purity of life required of the cleric celebrating the Sacred Mysteries.²⁷ Soon thereafter, Amalarius of Metz (835 AD) gives the first sustained Western theological explanation of vestments, describing the alb as representative of baptismal purity and the common dignity of service.²⁸ This is, likewise, reflected in the prayers which the priest prays when putting on the alb:



Cleanse me, O Lord, and purify my heart,
that, washed in the Blood of the Lamb,
I may enjoy everlasting joys.

The Alb Today

Today the alb is seen as “the sacred garment common to all ordained and instituted ministers of any rank. . .”²⁹ Its theological significance is described at length by the *Ceremonial of Bishops* as a sign of our Baptism:

While the Council did not explicitly treat the alb as a baptismal sign, postconciliar legislation developed this insight with greater clarity. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal identifies the alb as “the sacred garment common to ordained and instituted ministers of any rank.”²² This formulation is significant. By describing the alb as common, the legislation underscores that liturgical ministry arises from baptism and incorporation into Christ, even as distinct roles are exercised through additional vesture (such as the stole or chasuble). The alb thus becomes the visible baseline of liturgical

²⁷ Cf. Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*.

²⁸ Cf. Amalarius of Metz, *De Ecclesiasticis officiis*.

²⁹ GIRM, no. 336; Cf. *Ceremonial of Bishops* [CE], no. 65.

participation, upon which hierarchical differentiation is layered rather than opposed.³⁰

In this regard, any consideration of the liturgical use and meaning of the alb should bear in mind the charge given at the presentation of a white garment to the newly Baptized:

N., you have become a new creation
and have clothed yourself in Christ.
Receive, therefore, the white garment
and bring it unstained
before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that you may have eternal life.

The Form of the Alb

From its first ecclesiastical usage, the alb was an ankle-length white tunic worn as the base garment and covering all street clothes. Similarly, in liturgical usage, it is, like Baptism itself, the foundation over which clothing of all other ecclesiastical ranks and functions are layered.

By the late middle ages, the sleeves of the alb become wider and heavier fabrics appear. The alb is sometimes ornamented with rectangular bands of silk or embroidery at the cuffs, the hem and occasionally at the collar in the liturgical color of the day. By the Tridentine period, the alb becomes less ample and more form fitting, with narrower sleeves, as it is increasingly worn over a cassock. The ornamentation of the alb begins to disappear by the late sixteenth century.

Today, the *Ceremonial of Bishops* draws particular attention to the Second Vatican Council's call for "noble simplicity" in the celebration of the Liturgy, describing the alb as "a simple white garment [which] embodies this principle in textile and form."



³⁰ CE, no. 65.

Its simplicity is not functional minimalism but symbolic clarity: whiteness signifies purity and new life, while the garment's unadorned lines avoid visual competition with the liturgical action itself.³¹

The Cincture

In Roman times, a more ample tunic required a cincture (cingulum) to gather up a longer tunic. Even in secular settings, the cincture acquires the symbolism of self-control and discipline. Such meanings passed seamlessly into the symbolism of the alb adopted for liturgical use.

Thus does Isidore of Seville describe the cincture as a symbol of the moral discipline of the clergy, while Amalarius of Metz sees it as representing continence, self-restraint, and readiness for sacred service. The Medieval vesting prayers follow along this same line: “Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity...”

The use of the cincture is not mandated, however, until the *Missale Romanum* Pope Pius V (1570).

The Cincture Today

While current liturgical legislation allows for the use of the cincture, it is not used when the alb is designed to fit without it.³²



³¹ CE, no. 6.

³² Cf. GIRM, no. 336.

The Amice

A rectangular cloth was sometimes used in Roman times to cover the neck and shoulders. Such an amice (*amictus* = that which is wrapped around) provided warmth, in the manner of a scarf, and protected the tunic and the vestments above it from sweat and soiling.

There is scant evidence of the use of the amice in liturgical settings until the Carolingian Period, when it is described by Amalarius of Metz as “the helmet of salvation”³³ and a sign of protection against sinful thought. Such descriptions are related to the common practice of drawing the amice over the head in the manner of a hood before gathering it about the neck and shoulders.

Amalarius’ interpretation is standardized with the widespread use of the vesting prayers.

Place upon my head, O Lord,
the helmet of salvation,
that I may overcome the assaults of the devil.

From this time, the form of the alb becomes open at the neck and the amice takes on the added function of covering whatever secular clothing is worn beneath it.

The Amice Today

In current liturgical legislation, the amice is optional, but should be used when the design of the alb does “not completely cover the ordinary clothing at the neck...”³⁴

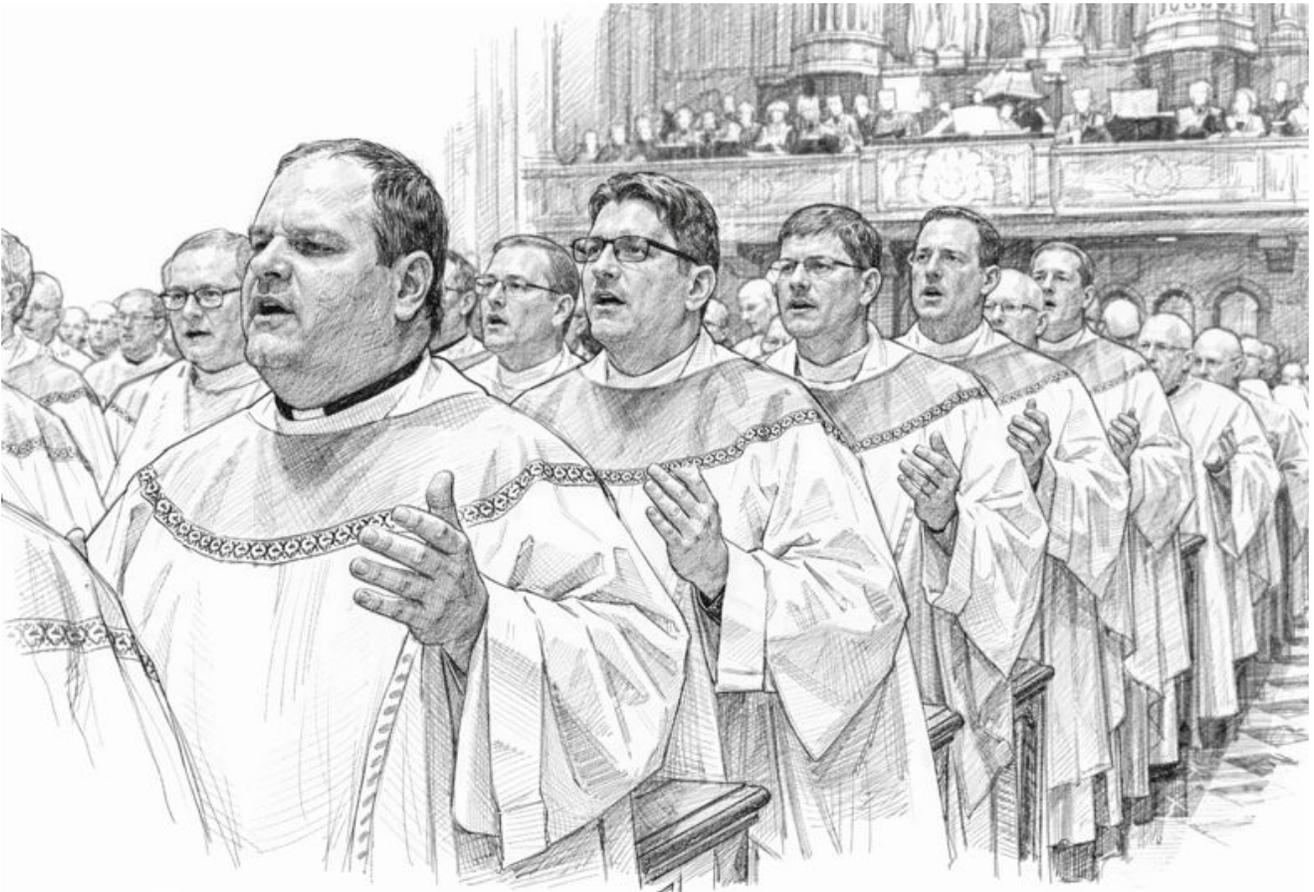


³³ Cf. Ephesians 6:17.

³⁴ GIRM, no. 336.

Concelebrating Priests and Choir Dress

The vesture of Concelebrating Priests is “the chasuble, or at least the stole, over the alb.”³⁵ Priests who take part in the Mass or any other liturgical rite “are to wear choir dress if they are prelates or canons, cassock and surplice if they are not.”³⁶



³⁵ GIRM, no. 209.

³⁶ CE, no. 66; Cf. GIRM, no. 91.

The Chasuble

As the alb has its origin in the innermost civic garment of Roman times, so the chasuble originates with the outermost cloak (*paenula*, *casula* = “little house”) of the same period, its liturgical use closely paralleling that of the alb.

The *paenula* thus became the standard Eucharistic vestment of the priest in the West. Early sources emphasize its enveloping nature, symbolizing charity and the yoke of Christ, rather than any precise cut or decorative scheme.

This interpretation is reflected in the vesting prayers of the ninth century, which reflect on the Lord’s words, “My yoke is sweet and my burden light,” asking that the priest might “so carry [this yoke] as to merit [the Lord’s] grace.”³⁷

Throughout the early Middle Ages, the chasuble retained its ample, flowing form. Often called the “Gothic” chasuble, is extended nearly to the wrists and ankles, requiring the priest to gather the fabric to free his hands. This form emphasized the sacrificial and contemplative nature of the priest’s role, visually separating him from ordinary activity.

By the ninth century, decorative orphreys—especially the vertical band that would later become a cross—were added, but these did not significantly alter the underlying shape. Medieval commentators, including **Isidore of Seville**, interpreted the chasuble’s enveloping form allegorically, associating it with charity (*caritas*) covering all things.³⁸ The fullness of the garment was therefore understood not as a hindrance but as a theological statement.



³⁷ *Domine, qui dixisti: Iugum meum suave est et onus meum leve: fac ut istud portare sic valeam, quod consequar tuam gratiam.*

³⁸ Saint Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XIX, 22.

From the late twelfth century onward, however, changes in liturgical practice began to exert pressure on the chasuble's form. The increased ceremonial complexity of the Mass, the more frequent elevation of the Host, and the growing use of the altar Missal required greater freedom of movement. As a result, chasubles were gradually shortened at the sides and, later, in the front and back. This process was organic and incremental rather than legislated. Tailors trimmed fabric and stiffened textiles, especially as heavier silks and embroidery became fashionable. By the late Middle Ages, regional variations had emerged, though the garment remained recognizably the same vestment in both symbolism and function.



The most dramatic alteration in form occurred between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. By this period, the chasuble had become significantly reduced, resulting in what is commonly known as the “Roman” or “fiddleback” chasuble. This form featured a rigid, shield-like front and back, with the sides almost entirely cut away.

While the **Council of Trent** legislated nothing regarding the precise cut of vestments, the Roman form became dominant in response to Baroque aesthetics and the influence of Roman tailoring. The reduced chasuble allowed for elaborate embroidery and symbolized dignity and order in an era that valued clarity and structure.

The nineteenth-century Liturgical Movement prompted renewed historical study of vestments. Scholars and reformers observed that the Roman form was comparatively recent and that earlier centuries favored fuller chasubles, which better expressed the chasuble's symbolic meaning as a garment of all embracing charity and sacrificial service.

By the mid-twentieth century, fuller chasubles, often inspired by medieval forms, were increasingly popular,

even before the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Importantly, the Council itself did not prescribe any single form.

The Chasuble Today

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* describes the chasuble as “the vestment proper to the Priest Celebrant at Mass and during other sacred actions directly connected with Mass.” Unless the rubrics indicate otherwise, it is worn “over the alb and stole.”³⁹ and emphasizes the purpose and dignity of vestments rather than their precise shape, allowing legitimate diversity.⁴⁰

Today, both fuller (“Gothic”) and more tailored (“Roman”) chasubles are permitted. Modern liturgical law focuses on noble simplicity, suitability to the sacred action, and continuity with tradition. The diversity of forms now visible reflects the Church’s understanding that the *essence* of the chasuble lies not in a single historical cut but in its sacramental symbolism.



³⁹ GIRM, no. 337; Cf. CE, no. 66.

⁴⁰ Cf. GIRM, no. 337.

The Dalmatic

The **dalmatic** takes its name from **Dalmatia**, a Roman province along the eastern Adriatic, where the garment was first associated with a distinctive long tunic worn by officials and persons of rank in the late Roman Empire. Characterized by its wide sleeves and straight, ample cut, the dalmatic was originally a secular garment, often marked by decorative vertical stripes (*clavi*) indicating status.



By the fourth century it had become a symbol of dignity and public office in imperial society. As Christianity emerged from persecution and began to adopt the forms and symbols of public life, the Church gradually appropriated this garment for liturgical use, especially in Rome, where it came to be associated with service exercised in solemn and public worship.

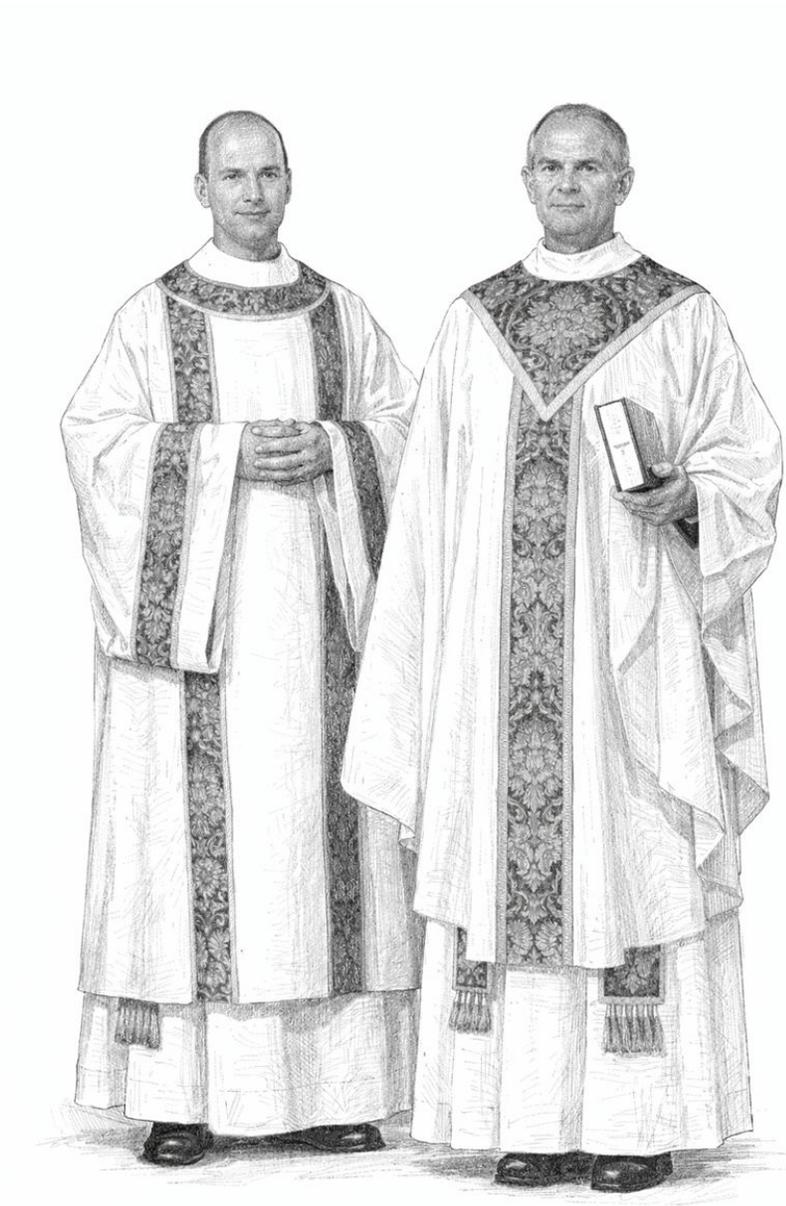
By the early Middle Ages, the dalmatic was firmly established in the Western Church as the **proper vestment of the deacon**, particularly at the celebration of the Eucharist. Its shape and ornamentation evolved, but its meaning remained closely tied to diaconal ministry: service at the altar, proclamation of the Gospel, and assistance to the bishop or priest. This is reflected in the medieval vesting prayer for the dalmatic:

Clothe me, O Lord,
with the garment of salvation and the vestment of joy;
and surround me always with the dalmatic of justice.

The wide sleeves came to symbolize freedom for service, while the decorative bands were interpreted spiritually as signs of the deacon's participation in Christ's ministry. Although its use diminished in some regions during periods of liturgical simplification, the dalmatic was consistently retained in solemn celebrations and pontifical liturgies.

The Dalmatic Today

Current legislation describes the dalmatic as “the vestment proper to the Deacon.” It is worn “over the alb and stole,” and “may be omitted out of necessity or on account of a lesser degree of solemnity.”⁴¹



⁴¹ GIRM, no. 338; Cf. CE, no. 67

The Stole

The **stole** originated as a form of ceremonial scarf or band of cloth used in the Greco-Roman world as a mark of rank and public function. In late antiquity garments such as the *orarium* or *stola* were worn by officials and persons exercising authority, often draped over the shoulders as a sign of office.

By the fourth century, Christian clergy—especially in Rome—had adopted this narrow band of fabric as a distinctive sign of ministry. Unlike the chasuble or dalmatic, which developed from common outer garments, the stole emerged early as an explicitly **symbolic vestment**, signaling that the wearer was acting in an official, ecclesial capacity.

Over time, the stole became the clearest visual marker of **ordained ministry** in the Western Church, with its manner of wearing reflecting different orders. Deacons wore it diagonally across the body, the stole of priests and bishops hung vertically.

Medieval theological interpretations deepened its symbolism, associating the stole with the “yoke of Christ” and the authority to teach, sanctify, and govern in his name. Because of this meaning, the stole came to be required for the valid and licit exercise of many sacramental acts. Despite changes in style, length, and decoration across the centuries, the stole has remained a constant sign that the minister acts not on personal initiative, but in the person of Christ and in the name of the Church.

Restore to me, O Lord,
the stole of immortality which I lost
through the transgression of our first parent;
and though unworthy to approach your sacred mysteries,
grant that I may nevertheless attain everlasting joy.



The Stole Today

The stole is worn by the priest “round his neck and hanging down in front of his chest...”⁴² This is a change from the pre-conciliar practice of crossing the stole, while securing it with the cincture, which is no longer in practice.

A Deacon wears the stole “over his left shoulder and drawn diagonally across the chest to the right side, where it is fastened.”⁴³



⁴² GIRM, no. 340; Cf. CE, no. 66.

⁴³ GIRM, no. 340; Cf. CE, no. 67.

The Cope

The **cope** originates as the *cappa*, a long cloak worn for warmth and protection against the elements in Roman times. Unlike the chasuble, which evolved into a garment reserved almost exclusively for the Eucharistic celebration, the *cappa* remained a practical cloak used both inside and outside sacred spaces.



By the early Middle Ages, as clerical dress became more clearly distinguished from secular fashion, this hooded cloak was retained and adapted by the Church for ceremonial use, particularly in processions and other solemn rites. Its open front and flowing form made it well suited to non-Eucharistic liturgical actions, where freedom of movement and visibility of other vestments were desirable.

Over time, the cope shed its hood—retained only symbolically as a decorative *caputium*—and acquired elaborate ornamentation, including rich fabrics, embroidered imagery, and the prominent clasp or *morse* at the chest. By the high Middle Ages, it had become the characteristic vestment for bishops, abbots, and priests presiding at solemn celebrations such as processions, the Liturgy of the Hours, blessings, and other sacramentals. The cope came to signify dignity and authority exercised in public worship, without implying the sacrificial role proper to the chasuble.

This is reflected in the medieval vesting prayer for the cope:

O Lord,
who clothed Moses and Aaron with priestly dignity,
grant that, vested in this garment,
I may worthily serve you for the praise of your name.

The Cope Today

Today the Cope is worn primarily “by the Priest in processions and during other sacred actions, in accordance with the rubrics proper to the individual rites.”⁴⁴

Provision is also made, however, for Deacons to wear a Cope when assisting the Bishop at a Solemn celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours,⁴⁵ a Baptism,⁴⁶ a Wedding,⁴⁷ or a Funeral outside Mass.⁴⁸ Provision is also made for the deacon to wear a cope at the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens,⁴⁹ the giving of certain blessings⁵⁰ and at Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction.⁵¹



⁴⁴ GIRM, no. 341; Cf. CE, no. 66.

⁴⁵ CE, no. 192.

⁴⁶ *Order of Baptism of Children*, no. 35.

⁴⁷ *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, no. 119.

⁴⁸ *Order of Christian Funerals*, nos. 182 and 275.

⁴⁹ *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 48.

⁵⁰ BB, no. 36.

⁵¹ *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass*, no. 92.