

THE MASS VESTMENTS

The Mass vestments were originally ordinary garments of the ancient Roman world. Although the fashions of dress changed with passing centuries, the priest continues to wear at the altar the ancient Roman dress of his predecessors. Thus, the priest, vested for Mass, bears wonderful testimony to the historical continuity of the Roman Catholic Church founded by Our Lord and Saviour and established in Rome by the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter. In the order in which the priest puts them on, the Mass vestments are:



THE AMICE: A square piece of white linen which is wrapped around the neck and covers the shoulders. The amice symbolizes the "helmet of salvation," i.e., the virtue of hope (I Thess. 5,8), that helps the priest overcome the attacks of Satan.



THE ALB: A long, white linen garment reaching to the feet. The alb symbolizes the innocence and purity that should adorn the soul of the priest who ascends the altar.



THE CINCTURE: The cord used as a belt to gird the alb. It symbolizes the virtues of chastity and continence required of the priest.



THE MANIPLE: An ornamental vestment of colored silk or damask which is worn over the left forearm. It symbolizes the labor and hardship which the priest must expect in his ardent apostolate.



THE STOLE: Roman magistrates wore a long scarf when engaged in their official duties, just as our judges wear a court gown. Whenever a priest celebrates Mass or administers the Sacraments, he wears a stole as a sign that he is occupied with official priestly duties. When placing the stole about his neck, in vesting for Mass, the priest begs God to give him on the last day the "garment of immortality" that was forfeited by our sinful first parents.



THE CHASUBLE: The outer vestment put on over the others. Originally this was a very full garment shaped like a bell. Historically, there are a number of different styles of chasubles as these diagrams indicate. The chasuble symbolizes the virtue of charity, and the yoke of unselfish service for the Lord, which the priest assumes at ordination.



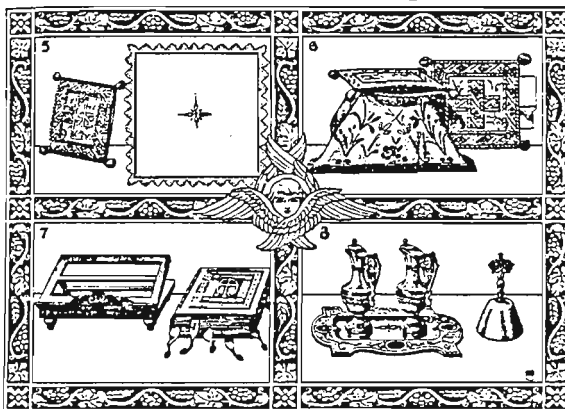
THE BIRETTA: A three-ridged square cap worn as the priest enters the sanctuary which signifies priestly learning.

The CHALICE is the most sacred of all the vessels. It is the cup which holds the wine for consecration; after consecration it contains the Precious Blood of Christ. At least the cup of the chalice must be of gold or silver and the inside must always be gilt with gold. The chalice represents the chalice in which Our Lord, at the Last Supper, offered His Blood; it also symbolizes the chalice of the Passion; and lastly, it stands for the Sacred Heart of Jesus from which flowed His Blood for our redemption.

The PATEN is the small plate on which the Sacred Host is laid. It is made proportionate to the chalice. It is of the same materials as the chalice, i.e., gold or silver but the upper surface must always be gilt with gold. Both the chalice and the paten must be consecrated with Sacred Oil. In Holy Communion our hearts become living chalices, our tongues other patens on which the priest lays Our Lord. May He ever find them worthy to welcome Him!

The PURIFICATOR is an oblong piece of pure linen with a cross in the center. It is folded thrice and placed over the chalice. The purificator is used by the priest to wipe the inside of the chalice before putting in the wine and after consuming the ablutions.

The PALL is a small square piece of linen starched stiff which is used to cover the chalice. It represents the stone which the Roman soldiers rolled against the entrance of Christ's sepulchre.



The CORPORAL is a square piece of pure linen, with a small cross where the Sacred Host is placed. Sometimes the corporal has a border of fine lace. It is folded into ninths and is carried to and from the altar in the BURSE. The corporal is the most important of the sacred linens. The priest spreads it on the altar; on it he places the chalice and the Sacred Host after consecration. The corporal and the purificator symbolize the linen in which Our Lord was laid away in the sepulchre. Because of their close contact with the sacred species, neither purificator nor corporal may be handled by lay people after use. The priest first purifies them before others wash them.