

Vestments in Church – why?

A church member said that she had been to services for over 50 years but never been told the meaning of a priest wearing special robes. And others said that they didn't realise the significance when we talked about it at the Thursday morning Eucharist.

So why vest? It is worth saying that a priest can celebrate the Eucharist whatever they are wearing. It isn't essential, and we don't do a formal robing ceremony at All Saints, but it does have value and is often in our minds as we prepare.

They can be helpful because

1. It helps one to be detached from everyday concerns (since they are not worn in ordinary activities).
2. It puts aside the individuality of the one who wears them in order to emphasize their liturgical role.
3. It is a statement that the liturgy is celebrated "*in persona Christi*" and not in the priest's own name.

The Vestments and the Prayers

1) **WASHING OF HANDS:** Before vesting proper, the priest washed their hands not only for hygienic purpose, but a signification of the passage from the profane to the sacred.

Scriptural Reference: Washing the Hands is equivalent to removing the sandals before the burning bush (cf. Exodus 3:5).

Prayer: "Give virtue to my hands, O Lord, that being cleansed from all stain I might serve you with purity of mind and body".

2) THE AMICE

Definition: The amice is a rectangular linen cloth, which has two strings and is placed over the shoulders and around the neck; the strings are then tied about the waist. It



has the purpose of covering the everyday clothing, even if it is the priest's clerical garb.

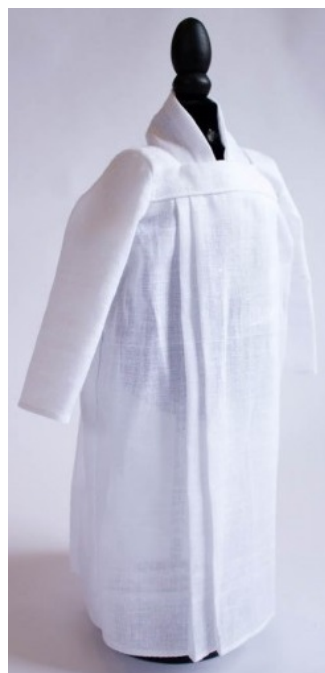
Scriptural

Reference: The amice is understood as

"the helmet of salvation," (Eph 6:17) that must protect its wearer from temptation, especially evil thoughts and desires, during the celebration.

Prayer: While putting it on the priest recites the following prayer: "Place upon me, O Lord, the helmet of salvation, that I may overcome the assaults of the devil".

3) THE ALB



Definition: It is the long white garment worn by the sacred ministers, which recalls the new and immaculate clothing that every Christian has received through baptism.

Scriptural

Reference: The alb (from latin, *albus* = white) is a symbol of the sanctifying grace received in the first sacrament and is also considered to be a

symbol of the purity of heart that is necessary to enter into the joy of the eternal vision of God in heaven (cf. Matt 5:8).

Prayer : The prayer refers to Revelation 7:14: "Cleanse my heart, O Lord; that being washed in the Blood of the Lamb I may deserve an eternal reward".

4) THE CINCTURE



Definition: Over the alb and around the waist is placed the girdle or cincture, a cord made of wool or other suitable material that is used as a belt.

Scriptural reference: The cincture represents the virtue of self-mastery, which St. Paul also counts among the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:22).

Prayer: It is based on 1Peter 1:13. "Gird me, O Lord, with the cincture of purity, that the virtues of continence and chastity may abide in me".

5) THE STOLE



Definition: It is the distinctive element of the vestment of the ordained minister and it is always worn in the celebration of the sacraments. It is a strip of material that is embroidered, whose colour varies with respect to the liturgical season or feast day. Together with the cincture, the stole symbolizes the bonds and fetters with which Jesus was bound during his

Passion.

Prayer: "Lord, restore the stole of immortality, which I lost through the collusion of our first parents, and, unworthy as I am to approach Thy sacred mysteries, may I yet gain eternal joy".

6) CHASUBLE

Definition: It is the outer vestment proper to the one who celebrates the Holy Mass. It is called "casulla" in Spanish.



Prayer and Scriptural References:

Based on Col 3:14 and Mt, 11:30: "O Lord, who has said, "My yoke is sweet and My burden light," grant that I may so carry it as to merit Thy grace.

Conclusion

While it is possible to use different prayers, or simply to lift one's mind up to God, nevertheless the texts of the vesting prayers are brief, inspired by a biblical spirituality and have been prayed for centuries by countless sacred ministers. By vesting properly, a priest prepares physically, psychologically, and spiritually for the sanctity of the mystery that will unfold, in a holy ceremony which brings God's grace and assurance of salvation to all who share in the Eucharist.

