

Living the Catholic Life
Article 1, August 2020

Some might wonder, “What is the connection - if any - between Catholic worship and daily life?” Still others may ask us Catholics, “How does the liturgy of the Church affect your life? Does the rhythm of the Church’s liturgical year really change how you live?” These two questions may seem strange, but those asking them are seeking a very honest answer, an answer that could make all the difference to the way we live. Our life as Christians and our liturgical life are intimately linked by the mere fact that the way we worship informs the way we live. Throughout the history of the Church, this concept has been summed up in the Latin phrase “*lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*” which translates to “the law of prayer is the law of belief which is the law of living”. This idea also impacts our Catholic culture because that culture is directly connected to, and receives its life blood from, the liturgy.

To begin with, the cycle of the Church’s liturgical year is intentionally Christ-centered. The “New Year” of the Church begins with Advent, our earnest preparation and awaiting the coming of Christ. Advent leads to Christmas, then Epiphany, followed by Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi, Holy Cross, All Saints, All Souls and finally Christ the King. These Feasts and Solemnities center our lives around the major events in Christ’s life and upon some of the central dogmas of the Catholic Faith, as well as our connection with the Saints and the Souls in purgatory and how they in turn lead us to back to Christ. From this cursory review of the Liturgical Calendar, we can see that the Catholic life, unlike the secular year with its federal holidays and presidents’ birthdays, draws one into an intimate relationship with the Savior by inviting us to relive, again and again, the central moments of Christ's life on earth.

The Church, through Her Sacred Liturgy, gives us an opportunity to not only go through the motions when attending Mass and other liturgies. Rather, She invites us and gives us all the means necessary to live our lives in such a way that the Gospel becomes enfleshed in our homes, families and places of work. Our parish church buildings are fabricated in such a way as to express and teach the Faith to us, from the stained-glass windows and statues of saints and angels to the very architectural lines that draw one’s eyes to the high altar on which sits the tabernacle and our Eucharistic Lord and King. The church building communicates a reality that is often passed over but is accessible to all. These two points, the life of Christ as manifested in the liturgical year and the intentional nature of the parish church building, are ideal places to begin to see the connection between living the Catholic life and liturgy and culture.

In the forthcoming issues of this periodical, *Nostra Leatitia*, we will take a look at various liturgical feasts and their lesser known traditions; we will look at different aspects of Catholic culture and how it encourages us to live out more vibrantly our Roman Catholic Faith.

Living the Catholic Life
Article 2, September 2020

If you were to glance at a pre-1962 liturgical calendar for the month of July, you would see around the time of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross three days called “The Ember Days.” Some of our readers may know what Ember Days are, while others (and I suspect the larger group) may not. The Ember Days are three days (successively Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) that are set aside four times a year on which special devotions, prayers, fasting, and penance are observed. The Ember Days happen around the change of the four seasons, thus giving the faithful an opportunity to observe the changes of the earth and prepare for the coming transition of the new liturgical season as well. The dates of these Days can be remembered through a mnemonic device: *Santa Crux, Lucia, Cineres, Charismata Dia, Ut sit in angaria quarta sequens feria*. Which translates to: Holy Cross, Lucy, Ash Wednesday, Pentecost, are when the quarter holidays follow. Though for non-Latinists, it might be easier to just remember “Lucy, Ashes, Dove, and Cross”.

As this segment of the newsletter is focused on Catholic life and culture, it is fitting that we focus on these Ember Days in the September issue. The last of the Ember Days fall in September at the beginning of the season of Autumn. Liturgically they arrive after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Holy Cross Day) and just before Michaelmas, so they are traditionally called the Michaelmas Ember Days. At Autumn time, we are reminded of the spring and summer when we planted, watered, and tended the fields or our home gardens. In Autumn, we reap the benefits of this time spent working the fields and the harvest is our reward. The Michaelmas Ember Days focus our minds not so much on our own work and abilities but on God’s blessings to us through the harvest.

“All things have their season.” - Book of Ecclesiastes

When we look at most Catholic Festivals or Holy-days, we see two parts: fasting and feasting. Now, with the New Edition of the Code of Canon Law (1983), the time spent fasting and abstaining during the ember days are completely voluntary. But, is it not true that when we fast before a feast day the feasting becomes all that more special and satisfying? And this is exactly what the Ember Days provide us with. The harvest season brings families, friends, and entire communities together. It renews among people the bonds with God and with His Church.

These Ember Days throughout the year are favoured times for priestly ordinations, prayers for priests, and first Communions. The Ember Days are also times for us to consider our stewardship of God’s creation. For it was in Genesis that God gave the earth to mankind: to cultivate, subdue, and care for it. We as faithful Catholics could consider living out the Ember Days throughout the year as a way of implementing the desires of our Holy Father in Rome as expressed in his encyclical *Laudato Si*. Since the Michaelmas Ember Days are a time of harvest, we might consider giving some of the fruits of our labors to those who are without fresh produce as a participation in the Church’s works of mercy, i.e. alms giving. (We are particularly grateful to those who have supplied our community with the fruits of their own labours!)

May the Michaelmas Ember Days, and all the Ember Days throughout the liturgical year, be times of blessing for you and your family!

“Pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest!”

- St. Matthew 9:38.

Living the Catholic Life
Article 3, October 2020

The coming of October seems to pass without notice, except for the change of leaves, the direction of the wind and the cooler evenings (that is of course unless you live in southern California). Many in the West, at least those of a more secular nature, focus their attention on the end of the month and the macabre celebrations surrounding Halloween. Many Christians, both Roman Catholic and otherwise, have an uneasy feeling about the evil overtones associated with this event, and rightly so in its current secular form. But, be not afraid! Halloween, or “All Hallow’s Eve” as we shall (and rightly so) refer to it going forward, is truly for Catholics and begins a three day set of festivities meant to prepare all of us for our ultimate ending on this earth and future reward.

All Hallow’s Eve actually has its origin in the 4th century. The Feast was first called the “feast of all Martyrs” in 615 AD, when Pope St. Boniface IV commemorated the dedication of the pantheon, a former Roman Temple, into a Christian Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and all Martyrs. By the year 741 AD, the Feast had grown to include not just the martyrs of the church but all the Saints in heaven; the name changing to “Feast of All Saints” in the year 840 AD. In the year 844 AD, Pope Gregory IV declared that the “Feast of All Saints” would be observed on November 1st in celebration of an altar he had dedicated to All the Saints in Saint Peter’s Basilica. All Saints Day became a universal Holy Day of Obligation in 1484 AD when Pope Sixtus IV declared it as such and gave it a vigil, what would be later called All Hallow’s Eve or Hallowe’en (“Hallow” being a word that means “Holy”).

All Souls day came to be established on November 2nd much later in the 10th century; this standardization is credited to Saint Odilo of Cluny. From here on we have the creation of All-Hallows- Tide (much like Christmas-tide, Easter- tide, Trinity-tide, etc.) which would consist of: All Hallow’s Eve, All Saint’s Day, and All Soul’s Day. Now each of these days or liturgical observances communicates a reality of our Catholic Faith to us. On All Hallow’s Eve, we are reminded of the reality of Hell, Satan’s rule there and his desire for more power on earth, the fact of demons and evil spirits prowling around, etc. In many ways All Hallow’s Tide is a small preparation for the coming season of Advent, where we ponder the four last things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. On All Hallow’s Eve we consider our own judgment and recall the reality that there are actually souls in Hell being eternally tormented for their transgressions on earth. On All Saints or All Hallows, we recall those who have received their reward and have been welcomed into Heaven. And on All Souls Day, we recall all those who have died in the faith and are awaiting, through suffering in Purgatory, their entrance into Heaven.

Now the question arises, “But why all the macabre, evil and dark pageantry on All Hallow’s Eve?” It is true that the secular world takes these images to an unhealthy and perhaps perverse level. But the motif of darkness, evil, and demons are just as appropriate on All Hallows as are goblin and demon statues outside of the great cathedrals of the Church. When we recall on All Hallow’s Eve the reality of Hell, Sin, the Devil and damnation, we realize that there are dark

forces at work in the world and that demons and the devil do in fact exist (contrary to what some miss-informed churchmen may say or think). The statues on the outside of a Cathedral are there to remind us of the dangers of the world on the outside of the Church walls and to bring about a greater understanding when one goes inside and sees the beauty of the Saints, Heaven, and the Tabernacle. And so we as faithful Roman Catholics ought not shun all that goes with All Hallow's Eve, but should realize that the evil portrayed on this night is there as a teaching tool. This night helps us understand the realities that are present in life: Sin has consequences, and a life of Holiness and contrition has rewards. Thus, we should go forth to do battle with the demonic represented by the evil and ugly costumes of the secular world with the light of goodness and the Faith.

It is my most sincere prayer that this All Hallows Tide will be a blessing to you and yours, that Roman Catholics everywhere will, as the prophet Jeremiah says, "...Stand ye on the ways, and see and ask for the old paths which is the good way, and walk ye in it: and you shall find refreshment for your souls" (Jer 6:16). Let us not be so willing to give up what is rightfully ours to the pagans of this world, but take back our traditions and give them to a new generation longing for truth, mystery, and salvation!

GENU FLECTERE IN CONSPECTU DOMINI
[Bend the knee before the Lord]

Over dinner the other evening, our community began a discussion regarding the proper posture to take when entering a church, when approaching Communion, when leaving the church, etc., etc. This got me thinking about how many different situations a faithful Catholic might find themselves in and how overwhelming it might be depending on the layout of the church or liturgical celebration. For the sake of time and space, I won't go into all the history and development of the different postures, but I will give some background so as to acquaint ourselves with the foundations on which the Church has built her current customs. We will also consider the various forms that can be used and those which ought to be used whenever possible.

When one reads Holy Scripture, we see that kneeling to pray was not always the normative custom. In the Old Testament, one who prays is depicted or described as standing. In the case of Anna, the mother of Samuel, we read that she said to Heli: "I am that woman who stood before thee here praying to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:26; see also Nehemiah 9:3-5). Christ also speaks of this custom when He says "And when ye pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues", etc. (Matthew 6:5).

Yet from further reading, we find that when the occasion of the prayers were of supplication, penitence, special solemnity, or the petition very urgent, or the prayer made with exceptional fervor, the Jewish suppliant knelt. Thus Solomon dedicated his temple "kneeling down in the presence of all the multitude of Israel, and lifting up his hands towards Heaven", etc. (2 Chronicles 6:13; cf. 1 Kings 8:54).

Esdras too: "I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands to the Lord my God" (Ezra 9:5); and Daniel: "opening the windows in his upper chamber towards Jerusalem, he knelt down three times a day, and adored, and gave thanks before his God, as he had been accustomed to do before" (Daniel 6:10) illustrate this practice. We can also see this posture among the first Christians, of St. Stephen we read: "And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying", etc. (Acts 7:59); of the Prince of the Apostles: "Peter kneeling down

prayed” (Acts 9:40); of St. Paul: “kneeling down, he prayed with them all” (Acts 20:36; cf. 21:5).

Throughout the ages, kneeling, genuflecting, prostrating, etc. took different forms and had different enforcements in law. In our day, there are (in general) three different postures that one makes depending on the liturgical function and the liturgical set up of the place. The three postures are 1) genuflection, 2) double genuflection, and 3) bowing (simple or profound). In a normal liturgical set up of a church, chapel, or oratory, the tabernacle and the high altar on which it sits are the central focus of the architecture. Because within this gold box dwells the very Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, it is not to be just lightly acknowledged. Here is where our first option — genuflection — is used. By genuflecting to the Lord in the tabernacle, we are acknowledging His True Presence. This posture would be used whenever entering or exiting the pew in the church. One may also genuflect right before receiving the Lord at the time of Communion and most especially if there is no altar rail or kneeler provided.

Our second option - double genuflection - would be employed when one enters a church and the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar for adoration. Here the Lord has been taken out of the tabernacle and the people have face to face access to the Lord. In these moments we are able to look our Lord in the eye... His presence is truly there. For this reason, a simple or normal genuflection would not suffice. Here we get down on both knees and bow our heads to our King and Lord. As a point of reference, not even the kings and queens of Europe receive such treatment and deference. If one were to have an audience with the queen one would genuflect on the left knee.

Finally, a profound bow would be employed when entering a church unlike that which we described above. In this situation, the tabernacle may not be present on or even near the altar. Here, a Catholic would bow from the waist upward toward the altar; for the altar is the place of sacrifice where the priest truly makes present Christ the Lord. If one is able to discern where the tabernacle may be kept; usually by the presence of the red lamp, then the normal genuflection would be appropriate to do in that direction. In all these situations, we must remember that our posture and actions in church and even when passing a church (where one could bow one's head and even make the sign of the cross to acknowledge the presence of Christ in the church) tell the world of our belief in the Blessed Sacrament. These intentional movements

also catechize our children and those newly acquainted with the Faith. Let us not forget that our faith is not just a faith of the head; our faith employs mind, body and soul.

AVE MARIA!

Living the Catholic Life
Article 5, December 2020

In our article today, we will be taking a small break from catholic culture and smaller “t” traditions to talk about the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady. Now, I say this is a momentary break from our usual topics only because the proclamation of this doctrine is so recent. Thus, it hasn’t had the opportunity to receive various customs, traditions, and rites as many other feasts, fasts, doctrines, etc. have since ancient times. And yet, the Solemnity is not without importance.

The Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is generally misunderstood to be about Christ’s birth on Christmas. Before I converted to the True Faith found in the Catholic Church, I too thought that the “catholic” doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had to do with Christ. And in some ways it does have to do with Christ, though the doctrine actually centers on His mother. The belief in the miraculous birth of Mary goes well back to the 5th century AD in Syria when the Eastern Church began to celebrate a “Feast of the Conception of the most holy and pure Mother of God.” This ancient feast was celebrated on December 9th and by the 7th century AD the celebration of the Conception of the Mother of God was widely known throughout the Church in the East.

This feast was brought to the Church in the West in the 8th century AD and it was then that it was placed on December 8th. The feast began to be celebrated in the Byzantine area of southern Italy which was then under the control and influence of the Normans. From here the feast spread throughout the Church and became standard in the main Catholic countries of England, France, Germany and eventually Rome. Even with this feast commemorating the conception of Our Lady, there was still no official statement or doctrine concerning the manner of her conception. It would take another ten centuries for the Church to deem it necessary to establish the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Now, the feast did not sit sleepily for ten centuries and go unnoticed. It gradually developed and the feast day itself had certain liturgical laws added to it. On December 6th, AD 1708, Pope Clement XI published a Papal Bull titled *Commissi Nobis Divinitus* in which he mandated the feast on December 8th to be a Holy Day of Obligation for the universal Church. Before this, and most certainly after, the feast was known as The Conception of the Virgin Mary in the missals of the clergy and laity. The festal texts of this period focused more on the action of her conception than on the theological question of her preservation from original sin. Some missals even had the same collect for this feast as that of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It would take over 100 years for the theological as well as devotional understanding of the term Immaculate to be discussed to such a point that it needed to be defined by the Holy Father. In 1854, Blessed Pope Pius IX declared in his apostolic constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* that, “The most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the saviour of the

human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.” Though this would seem like a change to the doctrine, it was, in fact, not. It was rather the first instance of the formal definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

Now the reason I tell you, our faithful reader this, is because our community of Canons Regular has a special devotion to Our Lady under the title of Her Immaculate Conception. Our name “Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception” was given to us by Blessed Pope Pius IX and Our Lady has watched over us ever since. It was at the time of the proclamation of the Dogma that the United States was given over to the protection of Mary, under the title of The Immaculate Conception, as the patroness of the United States. So not just the Canons have a special link to Our Lady but all Americans do and should also!

During this month’s feast of the Immaculate Conception, our community celebrated the Divine Office as well as the Mass of the Immaculate Conception with great solemnity. It is our duty and privilege to be protected by Our Immaculate Lady as well as encourage devotion to her under her title of Immaculate.

AVE MARIA!

Living the Catholic Life
January 2021

In this edition of “Living the Catholic Life” we are focusing on the Novitiate; that being because the brothers who write for this newsletter have recently become novices. As we just received the habit, we will be looking at the religious habit in general and our religious habit specifically. In previous generations and epochs of the Church almost all religious of varying types wore a religious habit. The current lack of religious in habits is a modern phenomenon. Even so, the religious habit has many meanings and reasons for being a part of the Church’s fabric and the religious life.

An online Encyclopedia states that, “A religious habit is the distinctive attire or dress proper to a particular religious institute. From early times the basic religious habit generally consisted of a tunic that was secured by a cincture or belt; a scapular; and a hood.” For women the hood is generally replaced by some type of veil or, more traditionally, a wimple. The wearing of the religious habit can be traced back to Saint Pachomius (294–346), who introduced cenobitical monachism (monastic life which stresses communal rather than solitary life) to Egypt where he was the first to establish definite provisions regarding monastic attire. Later on, we find that Saint Basil put down statutes for eastern monks to follow regarding clothing for the community members and Saint Benedict did the same for western monks throughout Europe and beyond.

The habit of Canons Regular is traditionally connected to the office of the Bishop because, historically, they would serve the Bishop in running his cathedral. These outward signs connecting the community to the office of the Bishop would be subtle to the untrained eye but are significant when pointed out. The two items that make this connection plain are the Mozzetta and the Rochet. The Mozzetta is the shoulder cape worn by bishops and is always colored in Bishop’s purple (otherwise commonly known as fuchsia). The Rochet is a garment worn by the bishop when in choir dress (during the Divine Office or particular liturgies). It is similar to a surplice but with considerably more lace and is more form fitting in the arms.

For our community, the Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception, there are certain aspects of the habit which are specific to our community. For instance, the foundation of our habit is the white Tunic. This garment represents the baptismal garment we all receive when we become members of Christ’s body the Church. The garment is also a reference to the Bride (the Church) which “...has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” (Rev. 19:8). The white Tunic also reminds us that Christ has clothed us with His righteousness. When we put on the garment, we say a prayer which reminds us of our dependence upon God for all that we have. The prayer goes: “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my chalice. You are He who will restore my inheritance to me.”

With the Tunic comes the black leather belt: a sign of the Canon’s commitment to chastity. This also connects the Canon Regular with the various religious movements which have

come before, as most, if not all of them, wore some sort of cincture or belt around their waist as a reminder of their own vow of chastity.

The last part of the daily habit is the Capuch (French for hood) which is black and hangs over the shoulders. The color black is an outward sign of the Canon's renunciation of the world and also a reminder for him to mourn his own sinful ways which put Christ upon the Cross. The hood is not only used for cold weather and to shield from the sun, but it also is a place of retreat for the Canon where he can enter into prayer wherever he may find himself.

The final part of the habit that we use is the Rochet, which was referenced above. The Rochet is the garment we wear as we pray the Divine Office. The prayer associated with this garment, which was also said during the rite of entrance into the Novitiate, is "Clothe me, oh Lord, as a new man who was created by God in justice and the sanctity of truth." These items form the basic habit of the Canon Regular of the Immaculate Conception. As one who is new to wearing the garment, I have found that it is a perfect example of the Christian life.

At the beginning of the day, the habit is clean and white - as if it was a soul which had recently been to Confession. Throughout the day, however, it seems that the habit becomes dirtier and dirtier. Sometimes I know exactly what happened and where the spots came from, yet other stains remain a mystery as to how and when they appeared. So the habit is truly a symbol for the Canon as well as for the wider Church and world. It is the hope of us novices that our wearing of the habit encourages all Catholics to live out their faith in the world, and that it draws those not yet Catholic to seek the Truth which only comes from Christ.

AVE MARIA!

Living the Catholic Life
Article 7, February 2021

For the next few months, we will be discussing the various articles of clothing (both common or daily and liturgical) that Priests wear. Some of the articles we will discuss have venerable traditions attached to them and have an antiquity associated with them that commends themselves to the priest's usage. Others are of a more recent creation but are none the less given to the priest and the Church to communicate the faith and a greater reality.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, as found at New Advent, the clergy in the earliest days of the Church did not wear any sort of differentiating clothing from the laity. In AD 428, Pope Celestine wrote a letter to the Bishops of Gaul (modern day France) commenting on the wearing of specific priestly garments. Pope Celestine writes "we should be distinguished from the common people by our learning, not by our clothes; by our conduct, not by our dress; by cleanness of mind, not by the care we spend upon our person." These words are commendable in the way in which the Pope instructs that the priest should not be so concerned with his outward appearance that he is either distracted by what he should wear or spends so much on his clothes that he is a scandal to the laity and the poor alike.

Now it must also be remembered that at this time, the clergy wore what the average citizen of Rome would have worn; what is called the toga of ancient Rome. This consisted of a tunic (what would become the cassock) and a longer robe made of volumes of fabric. As time went on however, fashions changed even as they do today. The clergy it seems continued to wear what they had always worn, and this turned into the priest's daily dress and identified him as a member of the clergy. Over time, the toga (large amounts of fabric) was no longer used by priests but became the Cappa Magna used by bishops and cardinals. The tunic was kept by the clergy and over time became black in color.

Before the turbulent 1960's and 70's, the cassock would have been the normal daily attire of the clergy in the West and in many of the missionary countries around the world. The wearing of the cassock not only helped the clergy live out their promise of simplicity, but it also identified them as priests of the Church. Different countries had different aspects to the cassock that varied locally. In England, all priests wore the cassock with the shoulder cape attached at all times. The clergy began to wear this after catholic emancipation in England. The reason for the cape was because Catholicism was illegal in England for so long that the clergy had not worn any sort of identifying clothing and were unsure of what to wear. The Episcopal leaders of England asked the Pope what they should wear and he replied "dress as I dress." And since the Pope is always in a cassock and shoulder cape, the English clergy took on this look but in black instead of white.

The cassock has various symbols associated with various parts that communicate themes to the priests as well as the observer if they are known. The buttons down the front are numbered at 33; this being in honor and remembrance of the Lord's 33 years of life and ministry on earth. On each of the cuffs, there are 5 buttons; this being in honor of the five wounds of Christ. Around the waist is a fascia or cincture. This is the image of chastity which the priest lives and

literally puts on everyday as he dresses in the cassock. The cassock is normally black in color reminding the priest of his rejection of the world as a consecrated priest of God and as a sign of mourning for his own sins and those of the world which he carries.

The more modern arrival of the clerical suit has its own advantages, it can be said, but it is the opinion of this author that the cassock for secular parish priests is preferred because of the statement it gives. Just as when someone is in need of a doctor and they await a man or woman in a white coat; when they need a fireman or policeman they wait for someone in the prescribed uniform, so it is with the priest in cassock. The identity that the cassock gives the priest is a benefit for himself as well as the faithful.

In times like these where community (both secular and religious) is either dead or dying, the presence of a priest dressed in a cassock can help to build a sense of community. This witness can also embolden Catholics everywhere to live out their faith in a more public manner. I am sure that when some of us have seen a priest out and about in society wearing his cassock, we have thought to ourselves “well if Father can put himself out there like that... surely I can live out my faith more publicly”. I ask all of our readers to encourage the priests in their lives to wear their clerics and more specifically to wear the cassock; for it is a sign of their office and a sign to the world that God is not dead but is very much alive!

Ave Maria!

Living the Catholic Life
Article 8, March 2021

Continuing with our discussion of priestly garments, this article will focus on the surplice: its development, its use, and its various designs. Many of our readers will be familiar with the surplice in their parish church liturgies worn by altar boys in their service at the altar and other liturgical functions. The exact date for the appearance of the surplice seems to be lost to history, but liturgical historians suspect that it first appeared in either England or France and then slowly migrated to Italy. The Augustinian Canons most likely had a hand in spreading the use of the surplice. For the Canons of Saint Augustine, founded in the second half of the eleventh century, the surplice was always a part of their choir dress and also a specific everyday part of their habit.

The surplice, it seems, is a cousin (though very distant today) of the alb worn by the priest under his liturgical garments for Mass and other functions. Up to the thirteenth century, the surplice was long enough to reach to the feet of the wearer. It seems that beginning in the thirteenth century and through the fifteenth century, the length began to shorten and remained at shin length for a period of time. It wasn't until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the more familiar cut of the surplice came into being in continental Europe and beyond. The English generally refer to the surplice by the Medieval Latin term "Cotta" (Italian for "cut-off"), which would make sense considering that the surplice is derived from the alb but was slowly cut shorter and shorter over time.

Though the surplice was originally more commonly worn by Canons and Canonesses, it became associated over time with the lower or secular clergy. In the Catholic Encyclopedia, as sourced by NewAdvent.org, says "*The name of the surplice arises from the fact that it was worn by the clergy, especially in northern Europe, over (super) the universally customary fur clothing (pelliceoe).*" This can be clearly seen in the way the surplice is worn even today. It is put on over the cassock when the priest is about to pray his Divine Office, hear confession, give a blessing, bless certain items, or walk in a procession, to name just a few instances.

The style of surplice varies by personal choice and even by country and custom. Historically, the surplice would have no embellishments whatsoever. This form of the surplice can be seen in use by many different monastic and canonical orders. With the advent of the lace industry in the 16th century, the custom of adding lace to the hems of the bottom of the garment and to the end of the sleeves became fashionable. There is a pious tradition that lace was only applied to the garment when it had begun to wear and fray from use. This would generally be associated with a much older priest who had served long and toiled much in the ministry. In this tradition, it was improper for a young seminarian or priest to wear a surplice with lace for it would communicate a false reality... for he had not yet worked in the Lord's vineyard long or hard enough to have the honor of lace on his priestly garment.

Normally, the surplice would be given to a young seminarian when he received the tonsure, signifying his entry into the minor orders and beginning his journey toward the ordained priesthood. In the modern day, this is not often the custom for various reasons and factors. Today the surplice is worn by altar boys as young as 6 years old and by men well into their twilight years when they serve the priest at the altar. Many priest's themselves have dispensed with the use of the surplice for the various liturgical functions mentioned above, usually in name of convenience and comfort. It is the opinion of this writer that the loss of the use of the surplice is a travesty to the wider church.

When one realizes that the surplice is there as a sign of the wearer's baptism, it becomes all the more appropriate for priests and seminarians to wear it at the proper times. The prayer associated with the garment is also enlightening when read; it goes: "Clothe me O Lord as a new man who was created by God in justice and the sanctity of truth." What might happen if more priests, seminarians, and altar boys prayed this prayer whenever they put on the surplice? What would happen if they internalized the words of this prayer and understood not only their liturgical duty but also their calling as Christian men? The world and the Church would be changed for the better if this became the reality. As we go on with other liturgical garments and customs, let us remember that all of these items represent deeper realities and that their associated prayers and customs are not hollow words and adornment, but are there to teach both wearer and observer, and to foster conversion and holiness in service to Christ the King.

AVE MARIA!

Living the Catholic Life
Article 9, April 2021

Continuing with our discussion of priestly vesture we now will turn to the items Father will use when preparing and dressing for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Since we have already covered the cassock's history, imagery, and the like, we will now proceed to the first item Father would approach in order to vest for mass: the amice. The amice is a piece of priestly vesture that was once used widely in the Church. Today it is less common, though it is experiencing a comeback in many places.

Let us take a moment to talk about the construction of the amice. The amice is generally made from linen and the shape is of a rectangle. Embroidered in the middle of the amice is a cross, normally of either red or white thread. On each end of the amice, upon the mirroring corners, there are ribbons attached. These ribbons allow the amice to be secured on the priest's body. They can be either of cotton or silk, and they may be in either white or other colors.

The origins of the amice seem to be lost to time, as are many of the liturgical and priestly garments we will be discussing. Suffice to say, the item is mentioned in the early medieval period as being a sacred garment first given to the subdeacon at his ordination. This can be seen in the ordination rite of the subdeacon when he receives the amice from the bishop, who says to him (in Latin, of course) "Receive the amice, by which is signified the discipline of the voice." Here we have our first clue as to the ancient reason for the amice. It seems that it may have been employed to help keep the neck, and therefore the voice, of the wearer safe and warm. This makes perfect sense considering the climate of many European countries and the need for clerics to be able to chant.

The amice also came to be used as a practical item in the safeguarding of sacred and therefore expensive vestments by helping to keep the sweat and oil of the wearer off the precious cloth of the stole and chasuble. But of course the pragmatic reasons are not the primary purpose of the garment. The way in which the priest puts on the amice and the way in which it is "tucked" in explain its meaning and symbolism.

After Father has washed and dried his hands he approaches the vestment counter and, making the sign of the cross, he takes the amice at both corners where the ribbons are and puts the amice behind his back. From here he raises it onto his head for a brief moment saying the prayer, "*Impone, Domine, capiti meo galeam salutis, ad expugnandos diabolicos incursus*" (Place upon me, O Lord, the helmet of salvation, that I may overcome the assaults of the devil).

After placing it upon his head, Father then drapes the amice over his shoulders. At this point, Father would begin to stuff the fabric of the amice between his neck and the collar of his cassock. This is to cover the white collar of his cassock. Some may ask, "Why would Father want to cover his collar? Is he embarrassed?" The reason he does this is because he is putting away his own priestly identity and allowing himself to be consumed in the person of Christ. Here

is where the priest puts on the person of Christ, leaving behind his own person, and acts in the person of Christ at the altar.

From here, Father will take the ribbons and cross them in front across his chest, take them around his back and then bring them around front again and tie them to secure the amice in place. From here Father would put on his alb (which we will treat in our next issue). The amice must be used, presupposing that the priest vesting is using a normal square neck alb or, as the General Instructions of the Roman Missal #336 says, “Before the alb is put on, should this not completely cover the ordinary clothing at the neck, an amice should be used.” For many years previously, this sort of alb was common among the clergy. Before the reforms of the liturgy at the Second Vatican Council, the wearing of the amice always was required as can be seen in the rubrics of the Extraordinary Form.

From this cursory look at the amice, we can again see that even the most simple of items for Mass can be full of imagery and catechetical instruction. As we continue on our way through the items that are used for Mass and other liturgies of the Church, let us internalize their lessons and pass them on to those who may not know what they mean and those who do not have the pleasure to see them each Sunday in their parish.

AVE MARIA!