

## **Vestments**

Vestments as they are commonly called have their origin in the ordinary clothes of the first century. They have now taken on a symbolic meaning reminding us of the tradition of our faith and the changeless focus of our worship. Vestments confer anonymity on the priest that focuses the worshipper on the significance of the liturgy and away from the particulars of the individual.

### **What do priests wear for The Eucharist?**

Worn, usually over their black cassocks are:

The amice, the alb, the stole, the girdle and the chasuble. These garments are laid out in the sacristy before Mass in this way:

Firstly, the chasuble, then the stole in the shape of an Alpha (Christ is the beginning), next is the girdle in the shape of an Omega (Christ is the end of all things), the alb is then laid on top of these followed by the amice with its tapes folded into the shape of a St. Andrew's cross.

**What is an Amice?** This is a rectangular piece of cotton or linen cloth worn around the neck and shoulders under the alb with strings around the upper corners by which it is attached around the body. Its name derives from the Latin verb "amicire" meaning 'to wrap around'.

**What is an Alb?** This is a full length white garment symbolic of the white robes worn by the elect as described in Revelation 7. 9-10. The alb was the ordinary dress of a Roman citizen and derives its name from the Latin word 'Alba' meaning white. It signifies purity and new life.

**What is a girdle?** The girdle is used to secure the alb and is tied around the waist – it is made of rope or cord and may be the liturgical colour of the day. (see later)

**What is the stole?** This is a long strip of rich fabric worn by priests and deacons. It is given to them at their ordination and a sign of their sacramental and teaching authority. It is worn both for the Eucharist and other sacramental services. A priest wears the stole around the neck with the two ends of matching length at the front. A deacon wears a stole across the left shoulder tied at the right hip. It symbolises service; Christ washing the disciples feet with a towel. The stole worn a Mass matches the liturgical colour of the day.

**What is a chasuble?** This is the outer garment of the priest at the Eucharist. Originally it was a cloak rather like a 'poncho' but has evolved over the centuries into different shapes all donned through a central opening for the head. Here at St. Paul's we wear the fuller 'Gothic' Chasuble. The chasuble represents the charity of Christ which 'covers all things'. It is usually made of silk or rich similar fabric with skilled workmanship and beautiful decoration as befits its symbolic meaning. Its name derives from the Latin 'casula' meaning 'little house' as it 'covers all'.

As each vestment is put on the priest says a prayer describing the symbolism of each garment, culminating in the placement of the chasuble with the words '*O Lord you have said: my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Enable me to bear it so that I may obtain grace*'.  
*light. Enable me to bear it so that I may obtain grace*'.

### **Why does the colour of the vestments vary?**

**White** (joy and celebration) – Feast of Saints and Our Lady, the Sundays of Christmass and Easter, also weddings and baptisms.

**Red** (Holy Spirit and blood of Martyrdom) Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Feasts of the Apostles and martyr saints, Pentecost.

**Purple** (Penance/mourning) Advent and Lent.

**Black** (mourning) Requiem Masses, All Souls Day, Remembrance Day

**Green** (hope and fidelity) Ordinary time. (Sundays after Trinity/Pentecost).

Other colours can also be used and if you would like to donate a set to the Parish please see the Parish Priest.

**Gold** (glory and resurrection) major festivals of Christmass and Easter.

**Rose** (subdued joy) third Sunday of Advent and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (Mothering Sunday).

**Blue** for the Blessed Virgin Mary.