

“Year of the Eucharist”—“What’s THAT called?” (Part 1) by Fr. Steve Lape

There are quite a few things used during the Mass that many people may wonder: “What’s THAT called?” Some you may know; some you may not. Catholics tend to appreciate more of the Mass experience when they not only know why we do what we do, as far as the rites, rituals and responses, but also how to identify the many things used by priests, deacons, servers and other liturgical ministers. Over the next several weeks, we’ll identify many of the Mass items used and the sections of the church. For Part 1, let’s begin with Mass clothing, which mean something more than merely being what ordained ministers wear:

VESTMENT: the general term for clothing worn by priests, deacons, or servers during Mass. Certain kinds of clothing worn by bishops, priests and deacons is for the purpose of reminding people of the presence of Christ in our midst, especially during the sacred celebration of the Eucharist. Vestments help to promote our baptismal call by the Lord to live for Christ first and foremost and to act on what Jesus teaches us to do.

ALB: a long white garment, worn by the priest or deacon, that extends from the neck to the ankles. In our parish here, one usually sees the deacon’s alb, while the priest’s alb is covered with a more colorful vestment. The alb points back to the type of common clothing worn by the people of the time and place of Jesus in the Gospels. The alb worn at Mass is always white, since the Latin word “alba” means “white.” (White, as I indicated in a previous article, symbolizes joy, purity and new life.)

CINCTURE (SINK-shur): a belt-like rope, which is wrapped around the waist and tied over the alb. In our parish, you see this on the altar servers, wearing the color that corresponds with the current season of the Church. Priests and deacons commonly wear them. Over the centuries, cinctures were seen as indicating the virtuous quality of purity that the ordained were called to live--in thought, word and deed--in how they dealt with others, the world around them, and themselves.

STOLE: a long, narrow piece of cloth worn by a priest or deacon at Mass or while offering the Sacraments. It resembles a long scarf that, for a priest,

wraps around the neck and hangs down on either front side. A deacon wears one that goes diagonally from his left shoulder and across his chest to his right side. Whenever a priest or deacon celebrates a Sacrament of the Church, the stole is worn. It usually has some kind of Christian symbol on it, often a cross. It used to be a type of garment that was worn by 4th century officials in the Roman Empire, indicating authority. It reminds us that Jesus is our ultimate authority—the King of Kings—whom we should all obey and follow in His commands and teachings.

CHASUBLE (CHAZZ-uh-bull): the colored, sleeveless, outer garment worn by the presiding priest at Mass. [The one for the deacon is called a “dalmatic” (dall-MAT-ick)] The color points to the current season of the Church. “Chasuble” comes from the Latin word “casula,” which means “little house.” It’s kind of like a poncho, a type of clothing meant to keep the wearer warm. It points to the ancient cloaks worn by shepherds on cold, wet nights. Since Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and the ordained priest at Mass acts in the person of Jesus, the chasuble becomes an important reminder of Christ’s loving, merciful, generous care for His flock.

