

St. Basil the Great Catholic Church

Meaning of the Mass

2019-1-20

The Chasuble

The **chasuble** is the outermost vestment (article of clothing) that priests and deacons wear at Mass. The color corresponds with the **liturgical season** or feast of the day. Liturgical seasons instruct us where to put our spiritual focus. **Green** is worn during Ordinary Time is the color of growth. **White or Gold** means celebration! **Red** symbolizes the blood of the martyrs so if we're celebrating the feast or memorial of a martyr, the priest will wear a red chasuble. Red also symbolizes the fire of the Holy Spirit, so red is the appropriate color for Pentecost or liturgies where the Sacrament of Confirmation is being celebrated. **Purple** is worn during Advent and Lent as a sign of penance, sacrifice, and preparation.

The word *chasuble* comes from a Latin word meaning "little house", and the chasuble is the outermost layer and **covers everything else** that the priest or deacon wears. This calls to mind something St. Paul says in the Bible in Colossians 3:14. He lists several virtues but then concludes "*...and over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.*" The chasuble symbolizes love, which for clergy and in fact all Christians covers everything we do.

The final purpose of the chasuble is to **hide the person of the priest!** Throughout Scripture and Catholic tradition, veils play a prominent hiding role. During celebration of the Sacraments, the priest is acting *in persona Christi*, a Latin phrase meaning "in the person of Christ". At certain points, when the priest speaks and acts, it is Christ speaking and acting. It may sound like an insult, but our priests would agree - it would be a shame if someone wandered into church looking for God, and all they found was a guy named Walt or Dave or John. Our priests want people to instead see Jesus when they look at them as a priest, and that is why they hide most of themselves behind a chasuble. Clark Kent puts on the cape so that you'll see Superman, not Clark. I guess that means the sacristy is like a phone booth!