

CG - The Meaning of the Celebration Vestments

Above all, we must remember that the best Habit we can wear is the Habit of a Christian heart. What should show on the outside through our words and deeds is the love we have for others and the respect we have for ourselves. The attention we draw to ourselves should be because we treat others as though they were Christ. Our habit is the external behavior we exhibit toward others and toward ourselves in keeping with the love of Christ in our hearts. There is no piece of clothing that serves us better than the Habit of the Heart.

Psychological and emotional attachments to external clothing can inhibit our mission. If a person pursues a Religious vocation just to be known as a "Brother" or "Sister", or just so they can identify themselves as a monastic by wearing a Habit, then he or she is on the wrong path. We recognize the danger of the habit becoming an external crutch for our spiritual understanding and growth, as well as being a potential barrier to interpersonal relationships and a fuel for dysfunctional ego-growth.

Consideration needs to be given, however, for the proper use of special vestments in preparing oneself for offering the sacred Offices (Matins and Vespers), Sacraments, and Special Occasions. These vestments can be an effective symbol. The act of dressing in these vestments prior to partaking in a sacred liturgy or other special events helps to prepare the mind, body and spirit for the offering at hand, and reminds us of the awesome respect we need to give the occasion.

The celebration vestments worn by **Professed Members** of our Community include the alb, hooded scapular, and the rope cincture. The colors of the celebration vestments are generally earth tones, to remind us that "dust we are, and to dust we shall return." Awareness of our limited time here creates the urgency we need to do our prayers, reflective study, and service, but also reminds us of the transitory nature of life, and that we will serve and be in the presence of God eternally.

Symbolically, the alb represents our vow of **Prayer**. Wearing the alb prepares us for the reverence and joy we enter into when we are in the Presence of God.

The hood of the scapular represents the vow of **Study and Reflection** we do of ourselves and the life we are leading. With the hood raised, we enter into a solitude and silence of contemplation where we are alone with God, our healer and teacher. This prepares us to serve others according to God's will in our own unique way.

The front and back aprons of the scapular represent the vow of **Service** that we do for others. This is the action part of our lives, the part where we directly interact with others in a spirit of servitude. Aprons remind us that sometimes the work is hard and dirty.

Binding all these three together is a rope cincture that reminds us that we are bound to the **love of God** as we offer our prayers, reflection and service throughout every day. . Everything we do needs to be in the Light of His Love. For as St. Paul proclaims, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God." As the new candidate for full profession is clothed with the cincture, the Guardian reminds him or her, "Remember, O Brother/Sister, that you are bound to the steadfast love of the Lord, and nothing can separate you from the Love of God!"

Br. Daniel-Joseph, CTG
Guardian
Revised February, 2013