

June 28, 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I've offered many times to respond to your comments and questions and recently I've invited questions about "How We Do Things at Holy Family Parish." Neither cyberspace nor the US Postal Service has been overburdened by your inquiries but I did recently receive a question asking me to comment on the vestments and their colors used at Mass. My response here is not confined to vesture at Holy Family because vestments and their colors are universal in the church.

The liturgical colors are purple, violet, rose, white/gold, red, green and black. Shades of **violet and purple** (and in some parishes, even blue) are used in Advent and Lent, seasons of penitential preparation for the feasts of Christmas and Easter. **Rose** is used only twice a year on the Sundays half way through Advent and Lent, indicating that we are half way to the feast for which we're preparing. **White** (or gold) is the color for: Christmas and its season through the feast of the Baptism of the Lord; for Easter and its season up to Pentecost; and for feasts of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin through the rest of the liturgical year. **Red** is the color of flame and blood and is used on Good Friday, Pentecost Sunday and feasts of martyrs. The two major "cycles" of the liturgical year are Advent-Christmas and Lent-Easter. Sundays outside those cycles are considered "Ordinary Time" and **green** is the color used. Thus, on most Sundays of the year green is the color of vestments. Up until the reforms of Vatican Council II in the 1960's, **black** was the color used at funeral and memorial Masses. As soon as white became an option for such celebrations, black vestments virtually disappeared although their use is still permitted.

The basic liturgical garment is the **alb**, the long white robe worn by our altar servers, the children's choir, the deacons and me (and bishops, too). A similar long white garment is worn by *every* Christian at his/her baptism. The servers and children's choir wear a rope belt called a **cincture**. Priests and deacons use a cincture, or not, depending on the style of alb they use. A priest wears a **stole** (a long scarf-like piece, in the color of the day, worn over both shoulders) over the alb while a deacon wears his stole over the left shoulder to distinguish him from the priest. Over the alb, a priest wears the **chasuble**, a sleeveless outer garment in the color of the day. Over the alb a deacon may wear a **dalmatic** in the color of the day, a garment similar to a chasuble but closed at the sides and with sleeves. Some stoles are intended to be worn over the chasuble/dalmatic and some under it. For some liturgies a priest or deacon wears a **cope**, a full cape in the color of the day. A cope is worn over alb and stole and is used on Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and at Evening Prayer. Some priests and deacons wear an **amice**, a kind of white kerchief which wraps around one's Roman collar or shirt collar.

Speaking of things liturgical... You may have read over the past year that Pope Benedict XVI might issue a document *motu proprio* on the use of Latin in the liturgy. (*Motu proprio* is a Latin phrase indicating that the document comes at the Pope's own initiative and not from one of the many Vatican dicasteries or commissions.) It appears that such a document will be issued soon.

What's this all about?

At present, all priests are required to celebrate Mass and other liturgical rites according to the norms and texts of the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1969. These rites may be celebrated in Latin or in the vernacular of the people celebrating. Since the time this Missal was

promulgated, some have lobbied the Vatican for permission to return to the Tridentine form of Catholic liturgy. *Tridentine* refers to the liturgy celebrated in Catholic parishes, always in Latin, from the time of the Council of Trent which ended in 1563 until the early 1960's. Those who remember Mass before Vatican II are familiar with this ritual. It is celebrated *ad orientem* which means the priest and people all face in the same direction, presumably towards the east. In 1988 the Vatican, by indult, gave permission to bishops to allow for the celebration of Mass in their dioceses according to the Missal of 1962 (the last edition of the Tridentine Mass prior to the 1969 Missal which was revised in light of Vatican Council II). Such "indult Masses" require the bishop's permission and in the Archdiocese of Boston permission was granted for such celebrations at Holy Trinity Church in Boston but recently that permission has been transferred to Mary Immaculate of Lourdes Church in Newton Upper Falls. It is wider permission for the celebration of the liturgy according to the 1962 Missal that the Pope's *motu proprio* is expected to address.

I hope that gives you some background against which to read the Pope's document when it is published. Reports already indicate that a cover letter of explanation will accompany the *motu proprio* and will be even lengthier than the document it accompanies.

I grew up in pre-Vatican II pews but in my 34 years as a priest I have never celebrated Mass in the Tridentine rite, nor have I ever celebrated Mass in Latin or *ad orientem*. It's important to note that while the *motu proprio* is expected to grant wider permission for what the 1988 indult allowed in particular cases, it is not expected to make any of these liturgical possibilities mandatory.

And *still* speaking of things liturgical... A few weeks back I included in the bulletin "Reflections and Reminders" on how we comport ourselves at Mass. Because those notes apply to all of us and since no one weekend finds us all present, I will occasionally reissue those reminders so that a larger audience may have access to them. They are included again in today's bulletin.

On the weekend of July 7/8, Fr. Rafael, a Franciscan priest, will be at all the Masses to speak about mission work and to ask for your support.

Last year 333 households were registered for Generations of Faith. In response to critique of that program our parish staff has worked very hard over the past month and a half to prepare a program in light of what we were hearing. Your early return of registration volunteer forms is crucial for our planning for the fall. To date only 135 households have registered.

As they say, "Do the math!" 😊

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming

**P.S.**  
**I've just come back from the Boston Pops concert at Symphony Hall where a friend of mine, Maria Perry, won PopSearch 2007! You can hear her sing with the Pops on the Esplanade on July 4th.**