



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

August 2018

My dear friends and colleagues,

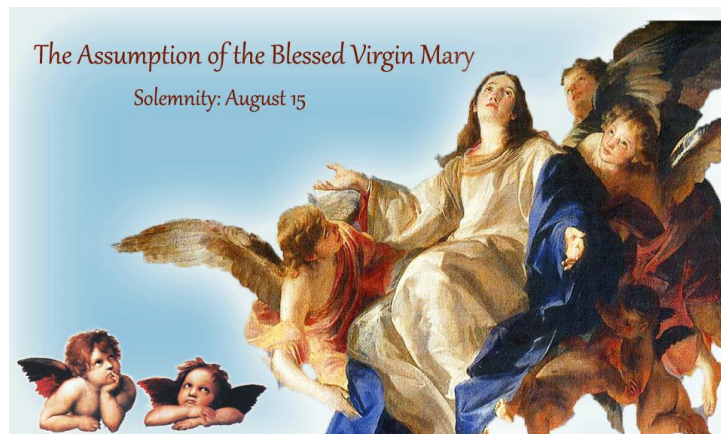
I often wonder why Christianity in the West is so desperate to conform to what can only be described as the anti-Christian culture surrounding it, to the point, it seems, of selling its own soul. Modernists might finally wake up to what they have thrown away when they realise that if you sever the plant from the root you have nothing to nourish or feed you. It could be too late by then. It's rather like someone cutting down a tree while you are sitting in the top of it – a practice rather unbeneficial to your health. A “lite” religion may seem attractive and cosy, but you simply cannot have the crown without the cross. If you dumb down the Faith and it makes no demands upon you it becomes pointless and completely ineffective.



To look at it another way, when you start to alter long-established institutions, just as with buildings that have stood for a long time, you must do so with great care. That is why buildings have Graded listings. Beneath the surface are other layers of bricks (or tradition) put there with purpose and intent. The nature of marriage, the sex of the Priesthood or Episcopate, are not just matters to be treated with a quick update, regardless of what was there previously. When we interfere with the things that formed us and from which we grew and were nurtured we endanger our own being and that of future generations. Change must always be seen as a more complex process than providing for the needs of today. Change today sows the seeds for a distant tomorrow. Don't forget, we are merely stewards of the here and now. Will our descendants look at their history books with disbelief and sadness at the heritage that we deprived them of for ever?

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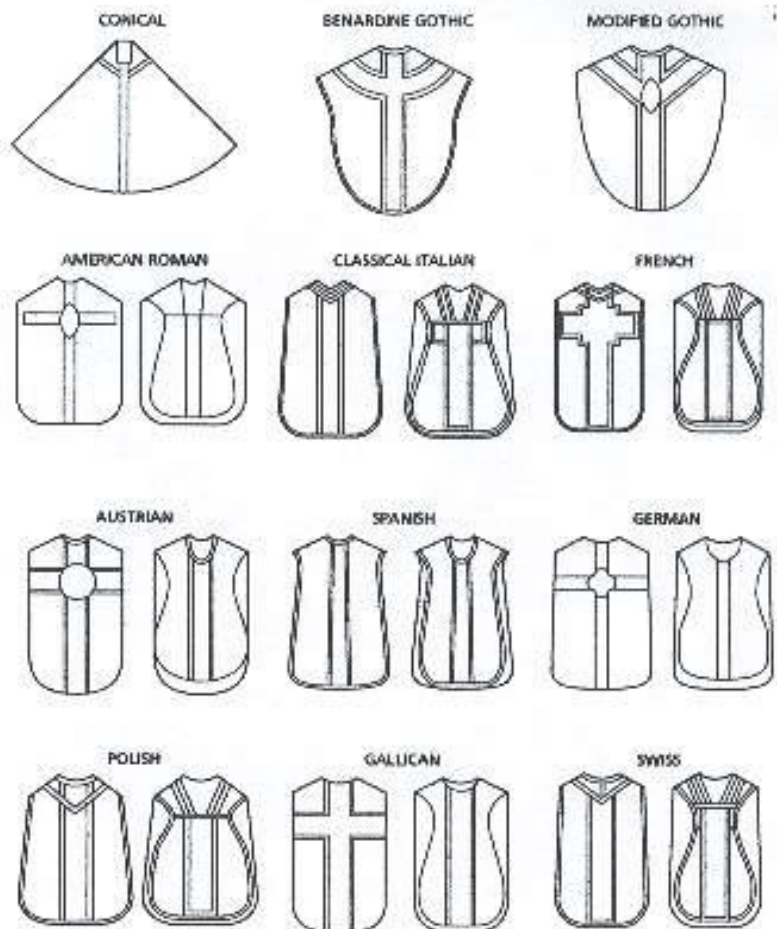
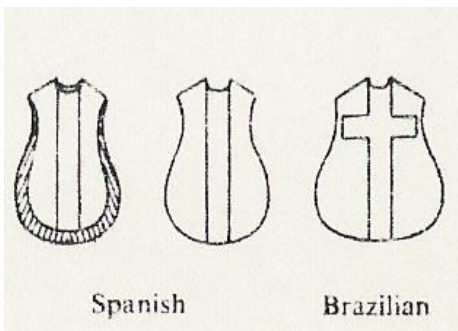
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But would I have the nerve?

From the mid-eighteenth century, bishops and archdeacons traditionally wore a shortened version of the cassock, called an apron (which hung just above the knee), along with breeches and gaiters. Gaiters were also worn by some cathedral deans. This form of everyday dress, common up until the 1960s, is now almost extinct. The purpose of this vesture was originally practical, since archdeacons and bishops needed to be mobile, riding horses to various parts of a diocese or archdeaconry. They were made of black cotton, wool, or silk, and buttoned up the sides, reaching to just below the knee where they would join with the black breeches. In latter years, the clothing took on a more symbolic dimension. The last Archbishop of Canterbury to always wear gaiters, and to expect his Bishops to do so, was Geoffrey Fisher, who retired in 1961. Some archdeacons, mainly abroad, were still wearing gaiters until the mid-1980s, and the Archdeacon of Montreal apparently wore them in 1999. The picture shows The Right Reverend J. Wyn Evans, when Bishop of the Diocese of St David's, wearing gaiters in 2011 – so they are still alive and well (just)! The TV comedy series of the late '60s/early '70s *All Gas and Gaiters* does show that the ensemble actually looked quite smart and dignified. Occasionally a certain colleague makes friendly threats to find me some gaiters. Well, it is said that they can make any leg look shapely, but I don't think that would be enough inducement to make me wear them. I take comfort in the fact that the necessary accompaniment of apron, frock coat and knee breeches would be prohibitively expensive.



Whilst on the subject of vesture, Latin chasubles are often referred to as fiddlebacks. In fact this cannot be strictly true as most styles have almost parallel edges at the back. "Fiddle front" would be a better description. In my opinion the only true fiddlebacks are the styles known as Spanish (and even that has a variation of cuts) and Brazilian. In true fiddlebacks the outer edges of the shoulders of the priest are often almost completely free of the vestment fabric. Compare and decide for yourself.



(At the risk of self-indulgence I will sometimes use as a "profile pic" some Isle of Sheppey scenes viewed either "from my desk" or within a few minutes of it!)