

Why Does The Priest Wear Special Clothing For Mass?

This special clothing is called *vestments*. The style of the vestments dates from around the year AD 400; after the Church had emerged from Roman persecution and resembles the clothing worn at that time by Roman citizens. The colors (red, violet, white and green) have special symbolic significance. Red vestments, representing blood, are worn when celebrating the events of Jesus' Passion, and feasts for the martyrs of the Church. Violet, signifying preparation and anticipation, is worn during the time of Advent and Easter; the weeks leading to Christmas and Easter respectively. White, the symbol of purity, is worn for happy celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, and feasts recognizing saints who were not martyrs. Green, the color of life and growth, is worn at all other times.

As to the biblical basis for vestments, see Exodus 28 which not only says for priestly garments to be made, it also gives the details of their construction. There is nothing in the New Testament which prohibits vestments. From the time of Christ until the 5th Century vestments were not worn because of the persecution and a desire not to look like the Jewish priesthood. Once the persecution stopped, the priests no longer kept up with the changing fashions and the vestments of today resulted.

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