

The Bishop's Vestments



In order to set the bishop apart, one who holds this office will wear special garments and bear objects, depending on the event, service or occasion.

Vestments are important liturgical garments worn by bishops.

The **mitre** is perhaps the most distinctive symbol of the bishop. Although there is some dispute about how longstanding the tradition is (some claim it is from the time of the apostles) there is no question that mitres have been worn by bishops for at least 1,000 years. Mitres are usually white, gold or red, sometimes quite beautifully embroidered, and have two tails, called “lappets”, that fall from the back. The shape of the mitre represents the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of the disciples gathered in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost, when God sent the Holy Spirit to the Church. A bishop receives a mitre during his or her ordination as a bishop, when the Holy Spirit comes to the new bishop in the same way that the Holy Spirit came to the first disciples. You will notice that, during church services, bishops take their mitres on and off, depending on what is happening in the liturgy. For instance, the bishop always

removes the mitre when offering prayer to God.

The **cope**, shaped like an outdoor overcoat worn during ancient Roman times, is a cape or cloak that is semicircular, richly ornamented, with a clasp in front and a hood in back. It is worn over the *alb* and *stole*. The bishop usually wears a cope at non-Eucharistic liturgies in place of the *chasuble*. He or she may wear a cope at the Eucharist during the entrance procession and even during the liturgy of the word. Bishops sometimes wear it when performing Episcopal functions such as ordinations and confirmations.

The **alb** is a long, white robe, probably dating from 4th century Greco-Roman times.

The **chasuble**, with an opening at the head, is an outermost vestment in an oval or oblong shape worn during the celebration of the Eucharist.

The **stole** is worn by bishops, priests and deacons when officiating at the Eucharist or other sacramental functions. The stole is of the liturgical color of the day and matches the material of the other vestments and may be decorated with different liturgical symbols. There are several theories regarding the origin of the stole's use including a kind of liturgical napkin called an "orarium", which is linked to the napkin used by Christ in washing the feet of his disciples, and is a fitting symbol of the yoke of Christ, the yoke of service. Others theorize that its origin is from the scarf of office among officials in the Roman Empire, used to denote rank.

The **cassock** derives historically from the tunic that was worn underneath the toga in classical antiquity. Bishops in the Episcopal church traditionally wear a purple cassock. The cassock is worn on non-Eucharistic occasions or when the bishop is visiting other dioceses. The cassock may be worn underneath a *rochet, chemise and tippet*. This is known as "choir dress".

The **rochet** is a vestment of white linen or similar material that is generally used only by bishops. It has long sleeves that often end in ruffles. It usually is worn over a cassock.

The **chimere** is a red robe without sleeves. It is worn over a rochet.

The **tippet** is a black ceremonial scarf which is worn over the chimere. The tippet worn by bishops is wider than the tippet worn by priests.

The **pectoral cross**, usually made of silver or gold, was used by the pope in the 13th century and came into general use by bishops in the 16th century. As the name implies, it is usually suspended at or near the pectoral muscles or breastbone, hung on a chain from the neck of the bishop. The shape chosen for Bishop Mayer's pectoral cross was inspired by designs found in a number of the Ethiopian Orthodox processional crosses from the 14th and 15th centuries. The shape is "patée" from the Latin word "patère" meaning "to open, to extend oneself". The dove at the center of the cross is a universal symbol of peace, and in Christian tradition, symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Moving "over the face of the waters", the dove hovers over a crozier, the shepherd's staff that is carried by the bishop. Tongues of fire descend on the bread and wine. These symbols point to the power of the Holy Spirit in creation, the ordination of Bishop Mayer, and the Eucharist. The moon, stars and sun on the arms of the cross reference the vast open sky, a defining geographical feature of the Episcopal Diocese of Northwest Texas. The discs which emanate from the arms of the cross are found in many of the early Ethiopian crosses; these serve to remind us of the mesas, mountains and other outcroppings that emerge from the expansive Northwest Texas horizon.

The cross was designed for Bishop Mayer by sculptor Nolan Kelley and was fabricated by jeweler Steve Hall, both of Abilene, Texas.

Since the Middle Ages, new bishops have received **episcopal rings** as a sign of the office. The ring is a symbol of the bishop's faithfulness to God and the Church. Bishop Mayer's ring has the seal of the Diocese of North West Texas inscribed on its face. The ring can be used as an official seal on documents that call for the bishop to affix a seal in sealing wax.

On liturgical occasions, a bishop will be seen bearing a **crozier**, a staff with a curved or hooked top similar in appearance to a traditional shepherd's staff. It is an object that is not only symbolic of the bishop's role as shepherd or pastor, but also symbolic of the governing office of the bishop.

THE COLOR PURPLE

Bishops wear purple shirts, presumably so that we might all know the difference between bishops and priests and deacons. Some believe that it is because purple is the color of penitence and that bishops are supposed to be reminders of that. Others believe that the purple color for bishops is derived from the ancient tradition of reserving purple for royalty and others in authority as purple dye was a rare and valuable thing in the ancient world. Lydia of Tyre was a "seller of purple" in the Bible. Jesus also relates the story about "a rich man who was clothed in purple."

Sources include the *Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, the Anglican Church of Canada, www.askthepriest.org,

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November 2008, www.wikipedia.org and The College for Bishops.

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