

The Cost of Looking Good in the Magic Kingdom

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Its not easy being a pillar of the Church and a successor of an apostle. The exalted role of the bishop must reflect the majesty and power of the Almighty and Supreme God who is much like an absentee Emperor who has left his properties in the care mere earthlings. Since these “mere earthlings” are the earthbound stand-ins for the Invisible and Omnipotent Deity while HE is away in some other universe taking care of business, it stands to reason they must look the part. All this talk about the Church being a community or a people of God is heretical poppycock. The Church Triumphant is a Majestic Kingdom. Jesus was the supreme King. He just never showed up in Jerusalem or its environs in his king suit.

Our model for this ecclesiastical fashion show is Ray Burke, formerly Lord High Bishop of St. Louis and presently the head of the Apostolic Signatura.....one of the Vatican courts. Although Lord Ray may be the epitome in hierarchical sartorial splendor, he is by no means the only member of the ecclesiastical aristocracy who drapes himself in the splendiferous raiment you are about to see.

All About the Sacred Threads

What follows is an enlightening exposition of the manner in which these sacred aristocrats must adorn themselves so as to accurately reflect the Unseen Deity they claim to represent as well as to help the lowly ecclesiastical serfs properly understand who and what they are in the hierarchical pecking order.

How to Dress a Bishop or, “Going to the Imperial Prom”

From Top to Bottom:

Start with the **Miter**, a pointy hat the bishop wears whenever he does rituals. He has to have two kinds for a pontifical high mass, precious and plain gold.

Under the miter he wears a **zucchetto**, a little purple beanie.

Moving on we start with the bottom layer....a **purple cassock** with a matching **sash**. Although bishops get to wear black cassocks with purple trim, the proper one for saying Mass is the purple one.

Around his neck he wears a **pectoral cross** with a special braided **cord**.

Over the cassock for mass he starts with an **amice**, a rectangular piece of linen, a remnant of a hood. Then comes the **alb**, the long white robe. The bishops gets to wear ones trimmed with lace at the cuffs and at the bottom half. The **cincture** is a braided rope worn around the waist, sort of like a belt.

The **stole** is worn around the neck and extends down below the waist. It matches the outer vestment in color and material. On the right arm he wears a **maniple**, a narrow strip of the same material as the stole. It looks like the napkin a waiter has over his arm.

Next comes the **tunic**, the outer vestment proper to the subdeacon. Over that he wears a **dalmatic** which is identical in basic style and cut but which has a distinguishing bar that differentiates it from the tunic . This is the outer vestment proper to the deacon. The bishop wears both because he has the "fullness of the holy orders." Finally the top garment is the **chasuble**, the vestment proper to the celebrant of the Mass.

The **buskins** are leggings or booties, kind of like the lining of arctic boots but made of silk. They used to keep his feet warm before churches were heated.

The final touches are ceremonial **shoes** and **gloves**. Bishops, archbishops and cardinals also wear a **ring** which is supposed to symbolize their wedded state to the diocese. Rings can be simple or ornate, with expensive stones.

The Colors. The choice of color is not subjective, based on how the bishop feels when he gets up. The liturgical rules specify certain colored vestments for certain feasts or days in the Church year. The official colors are **white, red, green, purple, rose and black**. **Gold and blue** are also optional colors. Gold can replace white for big feasts and **blue** can be used for feasts of the Virgin Mary in certain countries.

More about colors....Black used to be worn at all funerals and Masses for the dead but it was dropped after Vatican II. Rose is worn on two Sundays of the year: the third Sunday of Advent and the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Color coordination is *everything*. The chasuble, tunic, dalmatic, stole, maniple, buskins, shoes and gloves all have to be of the proper liturgical color and all obviously have to match. This means that the well-dressed bishop has to have at least four separate sets (white, red, green and purple) and if he is *really high fashion*, he'll also have gold, rose and black.

The attendants. A pontifical high mass requires a cast of people...sort of like a society wedding that requires a team of bridesmaids and groomsmen. The celebrant who is the bishop, is obvious. He is assisted by the deacon, sub-deacon, archpriest and two deacons of honor. They all wear vestments that match the celebrant.

THE COST OF LOOKING GOOD IN THE MAGIC KINGDOM

Ray Burke – Best dressed Anachronism for 2010





Miter -- \$6000.00

Gold Miter \$750



Gloves -- \$1000.00

Threads for the Episcopal Dome



\$13,000.00



\$6000.00



\$750.00



\$125.00

\$250.00



Matching accessories – a MUST



\$1000.00 a pair



\$800.00 a pair



**\$800.00
a pair**



\$39.00 a pair



\$550.00



\$175.00



\$1800.00



\$250.00



Chasuble --\$9000.



Dalmatic -- \$7500.00

Attendants in matching outfits



Cope ... for the Archpriest

Dalmatic and tunic for
deacon and subdeacon





Cope -- \$3600 (\$5000.00 USD)

Dalmatic -- \$7500 (\$10,425.00 USD)

Tunic -- \$7500 (\$10,425.00 USD)

Chasuble -- \$9000 (\$12,510.00 USD)

Grand total, just for the outer layers -- \$27,600 (\$38,364.00 USD)

All prices in Euro: USD In Parentheses

Chasuble	\$9000.
Alb	\$550.
Amice	\$40.
Cassock	\$550.
Sash	\$175.
Socks	\$20.
Shoes	\$800.
Buskins	\$320.
Tunic	\$500
Dalmatic	\$500
Gloves	\$1000
Zucchetto	\$125
Biretta	\$250
Pectoral Cross	\$1800
Cord for Cross	\$250
Miter	\$6000

What it costs for
Lord Ray to look
good for Jesus

Grand Total \$21,880 or **\$30,413.20 USD**

The Ecclesiastical Equivalent of Rodeo Drive



Episcopal Bling



\$6975.



\$4595.



\$225.



\$4600.



\$2600.



\$3695.

Most rings and croziers are made to order hence its hard to get prices but the above will give some idea....it makes Mr. T look like a pauper

WHERE TO GET THE OUTFITS

It appears that Lord Ray gets his outer threads, the chasubles, tunics, miters, gloves and shoes from an outfit in Rome known as **Ars-Regia**. Their web site is www.tridentinum.com.

The other stuff, the socks, zucchetto, biretta, cassocks etc. probably come from **Gammarelli**, the most prestigious tailor in Rome. That's the place where the pope gets his white cassock.

The bling comes from a variety of places in Rome and elsewhere.

One thing is certain....the Catholic church doesn't have the equivalent of Macy's, Target or Kohl's. The guys who are really into this stuff get their gowns etc. from the top places...and it ain't cheap!!!

On a serious note

Although this virtual fashion show is a combination of humor and sarcasm, underneath that there is a very serious issue. At Vatican Council II, almost half a century ago, the bishops of the entire church agreed that it was time to simplify the titles, honors and dress of the hierarchy in a spirit of poverty. After the council ended this attitude was put into practice when the simplification was officially decreed.

The return to the pre-Vatican world, blessed by Benedict XVI, has brought back the extravagant and anachronistic vesture of a church long gone.

There is a fundamental disconnect between Pope Benedict's constant criticism of **secularism** and the ultra-expensive ecclesiastical materialism so obvious in the obsession with the lavish finery that has re-appeared on the scene.

The spectacle of Ray Burke, decked out to the tune of \$30,000.00 is not only obscene, but it is heretical and blatantly opposed to the spirit of Christ. It may be necessary to spend that much to be part of a living museum, but certainly not to be a Christian. Burke is not the only member of today's collection of bishops to retreat back to the days when they thought they were a privileged aristocracy lording over the vast mass of lay people whom they regarded as little more than serfs.

In their fear and insecurity they have created an insular world that may look like the gilded monarchy of days long gone, but this illusory world is simply that, an illusion.