

Reasons Why a Priest Should Wear His Cassock

- **The Cassock is a sign of priestly consecration to the Lord.** As a wedding ring distinguishes husband and wife and symbolizes the union they enjoy, so the cassock identifies bishops and priests (and often deacons and seminarians) and manifests their proximity to the Divine Master by virtue of their free consent to the ordained ministry to which they have been (or may be) called.
- By wearing clerical clothing and not possessing excess clothes, the priest demonstrates adherence to the Lord's example of material poverty. **The priest does not choose his clothes – the Church has, thanks to her accumulated wisdom over the past two millennia.** Humble acceptance of the Church's desire that the priest wear the Cassock illustrates a healthy submission to authority and conformity to the will of Jesus Christ as expressed through his Church.
- **The wearing of the Cassock is the repeated, ardent desire of the Church through the ages.** The Cassock prevents "mixed messages"; other people will recognize the priest's intentions when he finds himself in what might appear to be compromising circumstances.
- Let us suppose that a priest is required to make pastoral visits to different apartment houses in an area where drug dealing or prostitution etc. is prevalent. **The Cassock sends a clear message to everyone that the priest has come to minister to the sick and needy in Jesus Christ's name.** A priest known to neighbourhood residents visiting various apartment houses dressed as a layman might trigger idle speculation.
- **The Cassock inspires others to avoid immodesty in dress, words and actions and reminds them of the need for public decorum.** A cheerful but diligent and serious priest can compel others to take stock of the manner in which they conduct themselves. The Cassock serves as a necessary challenge to an age drowning in impurity, exhibited by suggestive dress, blasphemous speech and scandalous actions.
- **The Cassock offers a kind of "safeguard "for oneself.** The Cassock provides a reminder to the priest himself of his mission and identity: to witness to Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest, as one of his brother-priests.

- A priest in a Cassock is an inspiration to others who think: **“Here is a modern disciple of Jesus.”** The Cassock speaks of the possibility of making a sincere, lasting commitment to God. Believers of diverse ages, nationalities and temperaments will note the virtuous, other-centred life of the man who gladly and proudly wears the garb of an Anglican priest, and perhaps will realize that they too can consecrate themselves anew, or for the first time, to the loving Good Shepherd.
- **The Black Cassock is a source of beneficial intrigue to non-Anglicans.** Most non-Christians do not have experience with priests who wear clerical garb. Therefore, Anglican priests by virtue of their dress can cause them to reflect – even if only a cursory fashion – on the Church and what she entails.
- **A priest dressed, as the Church wants is a reminder of God and of the sacred.** The prevailing secular mess is not kind to images that connote the Almighty, the Church, etc. When one wears the Cassock, the hearts and minds of others are refreshingly raised to the “Higher Being” who is usually relegated to a tiny footnote in the agenda of contemporary culture and life style.
- The Cassock is also a reminder to the priest that he is “never not a priest.” With so much confusion prevalent today, the Cassock can help the priest avoid internal doubt as to who he is. **Two wardrobes** can easily lead – and often does – **to two lifestyles, or even two personalities.**
- **A priest in a Cassock is a walking vocation message.** The sight of a cheerful, happy priest confidently walking down the street can be a magnet drawing young men to consider the possibility that God is calling them to the priesthood. **God does the calling; the priest is simply a visible sign God will use to draw men unto Himself.**
- **The Cassock makes the priest available at all times for the Sacraments,** especially Confession and the Anointing of the Sick, and for crisis situations. Because the Cassock gives instant recognition, priests who wear it make themselves more apt to be approached, particularly when seriously needed.
- **The Cassock is a sign that the priest is striving to become holy by living out his vocation always.** It is a sacrifice to make oneself constantly available to souls by being publicly identifiable as a priest, but a sacrifice pleasing to Our Divine Lord. We are reminded of how the people came to him, and how he never turned them away. There are so many people

who will benefit by our sacrifice of striving to be holy priests without interruption.

- **The Cassock serves as a reminder to “withdrawn Christians” not to forget their irregular situation and their responsibilities to the Lord.** The priest is a witness – for good or ill – to Jesus Christ and his Holy Church. When a “fallen-away” person sees a priest, he is encouraged to recall that the Church continues to exist. A cheerful priest provides a helpful reminder of the Church.
- **The wearing of Clerical Clothing is a sacrifice at times, especially in hot weather.** The best mortifications are the ones we do not look for. Putting up with the discomforts of heat and humidity can be wonderful compensation for the priest’s own sins, and a means of obtaining graces for his parishioners.
- **The Cassock serves as a “sign of contradiction” to a world lost in sin and rebellion against the Creator God.** The Cassock makes a powerful statement: the priest as an alternate Christ; has accepted the Redeemer’s mandate to take the Gospel into the public, regardless of personal cost.
- **The Cassock helps priests to avoid the on duty/off duty mentality of priestly service.** The numbers 24 and 7 should be a priest’s special numbers: priests are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Priests are not men who engage in the “priest profession.” On or off duty, the priest should be available to whomever God may send his way. The “lost sheep” do not make appointments.
- **The “officers” in Jesus Christ’s army should be identifiable as such.** Traditionally, priest have remarked that those who receive the Sacrament of Confirmation become “soldiers” of Christ, adult Christians ready and willing to defend His name and His Church. Those who are ordained as deacons, priests and bishops must also be prepared – whatever the stakes – to shepherd the flock of the Lord. Those priests who wear the Cassock show forth their role unmistakably as leaders in the Church.
- **Most Anglicans expect their priests to dress accordingly.** Priests have long provided a great measure of comfort and security to their people. As youths, Anglicans are taught that the priest is God’s representative – someone they can trust. Hence, the People of God want to know who these representatives are and what they stand for. The cherished custom of wearing distinguishable dress has been for centuries

sanctioned by the Church; it is not an arbitrary imposition. Anglicans expect their priests to dress as priests and to behave in harmony with Church teaching and practice. As we have painfully observed over the last few years, the faithful are especially bothered and harmed when priests defy the legitimate authority of the Church, and teach and act in inappropriate and even sinful ways.

- **A priest's life is not his own; he belongs to God in a special way, he is sent out to serve the Lord with his life.** When a priest awakes each morning, he should turn his thoughts to our loving God, and ask for the grace to serve Him and His parish well that day. He should remind himself of his status as "His chosen servants" by putting on the attire that proclaims for all to see that God is still working in this world through the ministry of the parishioners and the community they live in.
- Fail not into the ways of the world; but follow the good practices that have been practiced over the ages.

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