

The Clergy

In the Orthodox Church there are three Major Orders Bishop, Priest and Deacon and two Minor Orders Subdeacon and Reader. All of these have specific functions in the Church and all have distinctive vestments relative to these functions. [For a further study of these Holy Orders, please see the section of this book entitled The Sacraments.]

Reader.

The universal garment worn by all classes of ordained persons is the Stikharion (or Dalmatic), a long garment with sleeves, reaching to the ground. Except for a short garment barely covering the shoulders when he is set apart by the Bishop (Reader's Phelonion symbolizing his dedication to the service of God), the Reader's basic ecclesiastical garment is the Stikharion. This garment (for Readers, Sub-Deacons and Deacons with wide sleeves; Priests and Bishops with narrow sleeves) is called the robe of salvation and the garment of joy, symbolizing a pure and peaceful conscience, a spotless life, and the spiritual joy in the Lord which flows in him who wears it.

Sub-Deacon.

In addition to the Stikharion, a Sub-Deacon wears, crossed upon the breast and back, a long, wide band of material, called an Orarion (or stole), typifying the wings of angels who serve at the Throne of God, just as do the Sub-Deacons, Deacons, Priests and Bishops. Sometimes the words, Holy, Holy, Holy are embroidered upon the Orarion.

Deacon.

Whereas the Sub-Deacon always wears his Orarion crossed, the Deacon, for the most part, wears his on his left shoulder, only crossing them at the time of the Communion of the clergy and the faithful. The Orarion is the Deacon's principal vestment, without which he cannot serve at any service whatever. In ancient times Deacons used to wipe the lips of communicants after they had partaken of the Holy Gifts.

In addition to the Orarion, the Deacon also wears the Cuffs (as do the Priests and Bishops) for convenience during services and also to remind him that he must not put his trust in his own strength alone, but in the right hand of the Almighty God.

Priest.

In addition to the Stikharion (called a Cassock (or Podriznik), in this case) with narrow sleeves, the Epitrachelion (what is worn around the neck an Orarion worn around the neck so that both ends hang down the front, being buttoned or sewn together for convenience), and the Cuffs (which for the Priest also symbolizes the bonds with

which Christ's hands were bound), the Priest also wears a Belt (Zone) around his Cassock and Epitrachelion, for convenience in serving at the Altar. It symbolizes that the Celebrant must place his hope, not in his own strength, but in the help of God.

If so awarded, the Priest may also wear the Nabadrennik and the Palitsa (thighshields), which are worn at the hip and are either rectangular (Nabadrennik or Epigonation) or lozenge-shaped (Palitsa). The Nabadrennik is worn on the right hip, but if the Palitsa is awarded, it is worn on the right hip, and the Nabadrennik on the left. These symbolize the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Over the Cassock and Epitrachelion, the Priest wears a long garment, sleeveless, with a hole for the head, called a Phelonion (Chasuble). [In the Russian tradition, the Phelonion is shorter in the front than in the back, with the back part extending up behind the neck.] This signifies that the Priests are invested with truth, and are ministers of the truth.

As tokens of honor, a Priest also may be awarded a pointed hat (the Skufia) or a tall flat-brimmed hat (the Kamilavka), such as Monks wear, except that they are of purple color. [If the Priest be a Monk, he wears the Kamilavka with the veil the Klobuk.] In addition, at ordination to the Priesthood, the Priest is given a Pectoral Cross, symbolizing that he must confess the Cross of Christ before all men as a Preacher of the faith. As further distinctions of honor, a Priest may also be awarded a Gold Cross or a Jeweled one. A Priest may also be awarded the right to wear a Mitre (a headpiece decorated with precious stones and Icons, similar to that worn by the Bishop).

Bishop.

The Bishop wears all the vestments of the Priest, except the Phelonion and the Nabadrennik. Originally the Phelonion was part of the Bishop's vestments, but in Byzantine Imperial times, this was replaced by a garment, similar to the Deacon's Stikharion, called a Saccos (sackcloth garment), symbolizing that the Bishop must rise to holiness of life, wearing this garment of humility. As Christ's robe was without seam, so too, the Bishop (as an Icon of Christ) wears the Saccos, either sewn or buttoned at the sides.

Draped over the Saccos, the Bishop wears a wide Orarion, called the Omophorion (shoulder-covering), which, in ancient times, was made of sheepskin. This hangs down in front and back, and symbolizes the wandering sheep which Christ took upon His shoulders as the Good Shepherd, which the Bishop also must be. At other moments of the Divine services, the Bishop may wear a shorter Omophorion (with both ends hanging down the front), usually called the Small Omophorion.

Upon his head, the Bishop wears a richly embroidered headgear, called a Mitre (headband), dating from Byzantine times and now symbolizing, as does a crown, the

power bestowed upon a minister of the Church. [The Mitre is sometimes awarded to Archimandrites, Abbots, and certain Archpriests.]

Upon his breast, in addition to the Pectoral Cross, the Bishop also wears a small, circular Icon of the Savior or of the Mother of God, called the Panagia (All-Holy), reminding him that he must always bear in his heart Our Lord and His Holy Mother, and thus his own heart must be pure, and his spirit upright.

As a symbol of his pastoral service, the Bishop bears a Staff (Crozier), as a reminder of the Shepherd's Crook and that he is a shepherd of Christ's flock. The Episcopal Staff has a double crook at the top, and above that a Cross. [Sometimes this double crook is in the shape of serpent's heads, symbolizing the brazen serpent lifted up by Moses in the Wilderness, which symbolizes Christ lifted up on the Cross, and whose Icon the Bishop is.] The Staff is also given to some Archimandrites and Abbots as a token of their spiritual authority over the monastery which they rule.

In addition, at certain times the Bishop wears a monastic garment, the Mantiya, which covers his whole body except his head. Its flowing lines symbolize the wings of angels, for which reason it is often called the angelic vestment. It has no sleeves (nor do any monastic Mantiyas), symbolizing for all Monks (of whom the Bishop is one) that the fleshly members are dead to the world. Unlike the typical monastic Mantiya, however, which is black, that of the Bishop is some other color, usually red (blue in the case of Russian Metropolitans) and upon it are sewn the Tables of the Law (square patches at the neck and feet), typifying the Old and New Covenants from which the ministers of God receive their doctrines. In addition, strips of cloth (called fountains) are sewn horizontally around the Mantiya, representing the streams of teachings which flow from the Bishop's mouth.

During Divine services, the Bishop stands on a small round or oval rug, upon which is represented an eagle hovering over a city. The view of the city symbolizes his rule over a city and the eagle (for which reason this rug is called an Orlets (eaglet)) reminds the Bishop that by his teaching and life he must rise above his flock and be to them an example of one aspiring to the things of heaven.

At various times during the Divine services, the Bishop blesses the faithful with two candlesticks one with two candles (dikiri) and the other with three (trikiri). The one symbolizes the two natures of Christ, while the other symbolizes the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

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