

Tridentine Community News

September 25, 2011

Liturgical Linens

Have you ever wondered about the variety of linens and cloths used during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?



First and foremost are the Altar cloths. Each altar used for celebration of the Tridentine Mass is supposed to be covered by three cloths. The top one is supposed to extend to the floor on the left and right sides.



Each small side table in the sanctuary that is used to hold liturgical objects such as the cruets of water and wine is covered with a Credence Table cloth, which may be of plain or laced linen. As with the altar cloths, the idea is to prevent any possibility of particles of Hosts,

drops of the Precious Blood, or blessed objects such as palms from coming into contact with the profane or dirty. Communion Rail cloths are optional and serve a similar purpose, providing an added layer of protection beyond just the Communion paten against Hosts falling to the floor.



Before Mass, the chalice is covered by a chalice veil and burse. The burse is an envelope, inside of which is kept the corporal. The corporal is a square piece of linen with a cross somewhere on it, which is folded into nine sections. The priest unfolds the corporal in the

center of the altar, and the liturgical actions of the Mass take place upon it. It is folded in such a way that the creases are on the inside, so that any particles of the Host that might be on the cloth are caught in the creases and do not fall out onto the altar cloth or floor when the cloth is folded back up and put into the burse.

Corporals are placed before any tabernacle on any (side) altar on which the Blessed Sacrament may be reserved, to provide a place on which a ciborium may be placed while the priest opens or closes the tabernacle door. A corporal is also put on an altar where Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament is to occur; the monstrance with the Host is placed upon it. Because St. Josaphat offers Benediction on Second Sundays and most every Monday and Thursday, an extra burse containing a corporal is always left on the altar, to the left side of the tabernacle, for convenience. If the monstrance is placed on top of the tabernacle or in a special niche, as it is at St. Josaphat, a special smaller corporal is placed where the monstrance ultimately sits.

Point of trivia: One of the corporals at Assumption-Windsor is not plain linen and has a familiar but non-religious design apart from its sewn-on cross. It took a while for us to realize that this particular corporal began its existence as...a napkin from a Chinese restaurant.

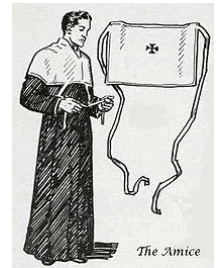
The purificator is a mildly starched rectangular cloth with a cross, which is folded and placed on top of the chalice. During the Mass, the priest uses the purificator to wipe the chalice, the paten, and most significantly, to clean out the chalice and ciborium after Holy Communion.



The Lavabo cloth can come in a variety of sizes and dimensions, rectangular being the norm. One is pictured on top of the Lavabo dish on the Credence Table photo to the left. A cross is optional and rarely seen, as the lack of a cross helps to distinguish a Lavabo cloth from a purificator. The celebrant uses the Lavabo cloth to dry his hands after washing them with water at the Offertory. Sometimes referred to as a hand towel, the Lavabo cloth is distinguished from a true towel by being made of (flat) linen and not of fuzzy material like a bath towel.

True (fuzzy) towels are called for at certain liturgies where soap and water are required to clean the priest's hands after a messy task, such as the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday.

The amice has been mentioned before as part of our discussion of vestments. It is a square piece of linen, with "string" extensions, which the priest ties around his neck and shoulders before putting on the rest of his vestments. It represents purity.



Linens are yet another realm where perfection must not get in the way of the very good. Few churches have three cloths for their high altars. Some priests will not wear an amice. There might not be cloths to fit every small table in the church that might be called into use for a liturgical purpose. One must make do with the supplies one has, of course with an eye to obtaining the missing items eventually.

And one more thing: It's not just a matter of owning these items. Someone has to be in charge of laundering and mending them as needed. That is an ongoing, time consuming obligation. We would be remiss if we did not express our thanks to Rosemary "Busia" Iwan for taking care of the linens at St. Josaphat, and to Diane Begin for doing the same at Assumption-Windsor.

Tridentine Masses This Coming Week

Mon. 09/26 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *St. Josaphat* (Ss. Isaac Jogues, Jean de Brébeuf, & Companions, Martyrs)

Tue. 09/27 7:00 PM: Low Mass at *Assumption-Windsor* (Ss. Cosmas & Damian, Martyrs)

Thu. 09/29 7:00 PM: High Mass at *St. Josaphat* (Dedication of St. Michael, Archangel)