

POLICY AND RATIONALE FOR THE DRESS CODE
FOR ALL LITURGICAL MINISTRIES
AT CHRIST OUR LIGHT CATHOLIC CHURCH

The manner in which we are groomed and dress when coming into the church, in the presence of the Divine Majesty of God, for sacred worship is an outward manifestation of the disposition of our hearts. It reveals our reverence and love for God and our neighbor – or the lack thereof. We are called to express our faith and reverent devotion with humility and commitment to our Christian dignity with the respect that is owed for ourselves and for all people who have been created in the image and likeness of God. This applies in a special way to all of us who have been baptized, for we have become living temples in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Through our baptism, we have been made sharers in the three offices (*munera*) of Jesus Christ: Priest, Prophet and King.

As a priestly people, we are to render the sacred worship of sacrificial love to the Almighty. As a prophetic people, the living testimony that we give by our words and our behavior, including the way we dress, is to give a living witness to the holiness of God that leads other people to become actively receptive to God's mighty and saving works. Our faith is not to be hidden away within the inner recesses of the heart as a purely private matter. This means that we are to give a credible witness to the living God before the whole world and to provide good example that is attractive because of its truthfulness, beauty and goodness. The manner in which we dress becomes a living declaration of the great value we place in the Christian values and virtues, especially respect, modesty, chastity, purity, humility, dignity, and noble simplicity.

As a royal people, we participate in the royal dignity of Jesus Christ the King of the universe who humbled Himself and came among us to fulfill our need for salvation and sanctification and who is now seated at the right hand of the Father in glory. This means that we, like Jesus, Who came to us in the flesh when He was born of the Virgin Mary, come to serve – not to be served. Our service and good example, builds people up, and encourages and inspires them to embrace the proper interior dispositions that will lead them to do likewise. As Christians, the way we dress at all times, but especially when we go to church, provides a service that can inspire others toward the good. If we dress too casually or immodestly (clothing that is too tight or too revealing) or wear clothing that has impure images or irreverent words, or clothing that is dirty, torn or tattered, then our bad example can serve to lead others into sins which offend against the holiness of God and the calling for all people to be holy as God is holy.

These considerations apply to all the faithful, no matter what their state of life or role in the Church. Persons employed by the parish – leaders and staff (paid or volunteer), those in Ministries or Apostolates (whether “in the Church” or “of the Church”) – have a special responsibility and opportunity to give good example in this way.

In view of the aforementioned considerations, *effective the weekend of June 25 & 26, 2011*, the dress code for all Ministries for all Masses is as follows:

Men and boys shall wear a dress shirt with collar and tie or a turtleneck shirt, dress slacks with a matching belt, and dress shoes with matching socks. A dress coat is also *highly recommended*, but not required.

Women and girls shall wear a *modest* dress, suit, or pants suit (with modest blouse and pants), dress shoes that are not *spiked* high heels, and, when appropriate, a matching belt. “*Modest*” is to be understood as covering the back and shoulders, no plunging necklines that reveal cleavage, and skirts no more than two inches above the top of the knee with no revealing slits.

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive list of every individual item that is inappropriate for Christians and especially in the liturgical setting. We must be guided by the following principles:

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Clothing and appearance should be marked by noble simplicity. Those in ministries are not to attract attention to themselves. Flashy makeup, some hairstyles and coloring, clothing, jewelry, other accessories, etc., become a distraction. We are to have the attitude, "He must increase while I must decrease." Cosmetics should be kept to a minimum.

Tattoos are altogether discouraged. Any tattoos **must** be completely covered by clothing.

Jewelry should be kept to a minimum. Excessive sets of earrings, rings on hands, necklaces, bracelets, studs, etc. are inappropriate. Ladies and girls may wear one set of earrings or studs in the ear lobes. Men and boys are prohibited from doing so. Rings, studs, etc. in piercings other than the earlobes are prohibited for everyone.

It should be understood by all liturgical ministers that the commitment to serve includes the commitment to dress in accordance with the stated dress code. Please follow this dress code with fidelity. Liturgical Ministers are encouraged always to come to church dressed in a way that makes one prepared to serve, even when not scheduled. If one does not come dressed according to this dress code, then one is to refrain from presenting oneself for service, except in cases of absolute necessity, in which case the inappropriately dressed Minister should, if possible, wear an alb while serving.