



THE WEARING OF CLERICAL ATTIRE

Every now and again, questions are raised regarding the wearing of appropriate religious clothing for priests, permanent deacons, and major seminarians within the Archdiocese of New York. Expanding on the communication that was distributed in 2016, these points may address the inquiries that have been expressed and clarify any misunderstandings.

- All priests (full-time and part time adjuncts, and religious) serving in the archdiocese are expected to always wear clerical attire or religious habit when engaged in ministry. It is this apparel (black suit and Roman collar) that most identifies a priest, reminding everyone that priests are *“taken from among men for things that pertain to God.”*
- In 1981, Pope St. John Paul II wrote a public letter and in it he stated that *“clerical dress indicates within the ecclesiastical community the public testimony which every priest is bound to give of his own identity and of his special dedication to God”* and *“distinguishes him from the secular environment in which he lives.”*
- In that same letter, the Holy Father reaffirmed the use of ecclesiastical or religious dress in the period of formation for seminarians who have been admitted as candidates for the priesthood and in religious communities from their first religious profession.
- Although the practice varies from one diocese to another, here in the archdiocese, for the past 50 years, permanent deacons, members of the clerical state by virtue of their reception of Holy Orders, do not typically wear the Roman collar, but rather their own distinctive insignia, often the cross pin worn on the lapel.

- Because they are prominent and active in secular professions and society, the USCCB has specified from the very first guidelines in 1971 that “*permanent deacons should resemble the lay faithful in dress and matters of lifestyle.*” This is our longstanding custom in New York.
- However, at times, to facilitate the diaconal ministry and after consultation with the pastor, they may seek to use religious garb to gain access to certain places, but it is not to be worn outside of these settings, such as while working around the parish, fulfilling a liturgical assignment at the cathedral, or attending the funeral Mass of a priest or deacon.
- While wearing the Roman collar, a deacon may be advertising something he cannot deliver, creating a “mistaken identity” at funeral homes, cemeteries, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes or danger of death situations when there could likely be a request for confession or anointing of the sick.

As a final point, in our archdiocese, when listing the clergy on bulletins and in other places, the proper manner of address is to preface the name with a title.

- For the priest, it is *Reverend* or *Father*.
- For the transitional deacon preparing for priesthood, it is *Reverend Mr.*
- For the permanent deacon, it is the designation, *Deacon*.
- For seminarians working in parishes during their pastoral year, they would be listed as *Mr.* or *Seminarian*.