

Should Priests Dress Differently?

By Fr Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE

One question I get asked quite often is why I wear a Religious Habit, the Clerical Collar, or a white shirt with crosses on the lapel, when so many other Priests and Religious just wear 'ordinary clothes' like everyone else.

Some people think I do it because I am Conservative or 'old fashioned'; others might think I do it to draw attention to myself. I have had some people tell me I should 'get with it' and be more 'flexible' and that the days of clerical dress are over and that I am stuck in the past.

The reason I wear clerical dress is that if I want to be faithful and obedient to the Church as a Priest then I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE.

The Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, prepared by the Congregation for the Clergy and approved by Pope John Paul II on January 31, 1994, says:

"In a secularized and tendentiously materialistic society, where even the external signs of sacred and supernatural realities tend to be disappearing, the necessity is particularly felt that the priest - man of God, dispenser of His mysteries - should be recognizable in the sight of the community, even through the clothing he wears, as an unmistakable sign of his dedication and of his identity as a recipient of a public ministry. The priest should be recognizable above all through his behavior, but also through his dressing in a way that renders immediately perceptible to all the faithful, even to all men, his identity and his belonging to God and to the Church."

For this reason, the cleric should wear "suitable clerical clothing, according to the norms issued by the Episcopal Conference and according to legitimate local customs." (Canon 284) This means that such clothing, when it is not the cassock, should be distinct from the manner in which laymen dress, and in conformity with the dignity and sacredness of the ministry.

Apart from entirely exceptional circumstances, the non-use of clerical clothing on the part of the cleric can manifest a weak sense of his own identity as a pastor completely dedicated to the service of the Church (# 66).

The obligation to wear clerical dress is understood not to be binding to the Priest whilst playing sport, recreation at home, on holidays, and the like, or in countries where the Church is under severe persecution.

Apart from the teaching of the Church, I have found in my own priestly life, very positive pastoral and spiritual reasons and benefits for being identified as a Priest.

Visible Reminder

Clerical dress reminds me that my priesthood is a vocation and not a job, that I am 'a Priest forever'. Some clergy have adopted a functionalistic notion of priesthood - that clerical attire is only worn when 'on duty' performing a sacrament or other pastoral duty and is to be put away when not 'on duty'.

Clerical dress reminds me of my priestly vocation of making Christ present to his people. I have heard Confessions in a Bus Station and airport. Many times I have had people come to talk to me in the shop, airport, plane and street about Christ or about some problem they had, asking for prayers. Sometimes people will give you a smile - it lifts their hearts to see a Priest. None of this would have occurred if I was not identifiable as a Priest.

Sacrifice

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 a wonderful reparation for our own sins, and a means of obtaining graces for our people.

Yes, sometimes I have 'copped' abuse from people because they knew I was a Priest. I have been 'ripped off' at shops because I was a Priest. I get 'fed up' at times with people staring at me. But did not Our Lord tell us to take up our crosses each day and follow him; are we not supposed to do Penance for our sins and those of the world? Clerical dress offers me an occasion to do that.

Witness

Clerical dress is a way I can witness to Christ. If I am identifiable as a Priest as I walk down the street or go into a shop, in order to preach Christ I do not have to say a word, people know who and what I represent. If my actions are also in accord with Christ's then I am evangelizing my brothers and sisters. Clerical garb also reminds me that my actions need to reflect the way I'm dressed.

Clerical dress reminds me of my consecration to God. It is like a wedding ring for a married person - it is a reminder of the commitment made and it sends a message to members of the opposite sex that 'I am not available'.

In the world of today there is a lot of pressure on priests to dress as laymen from outside the Church and, sadly, from some inside the Church as well. When you see a Priest 'out and about' identifiable as a Priest, go up and offer some encouragement to him.

I always remember what the late Pope John Paul II said during his 1979 visit to Ireland. Before a crowd of 50,000 he addressed Priests and Religious appealing to them not to help "the trend towards taking God off the streets by adopting secular modes of dress and behaviour". He received a thunderous applause from the crowd.

Her Valley

Tis hidden from the outside world,
A haven given to us by God.
A treasure beyond explanation
Priceless --- beyond thought --- all ours !!!

It is hidden, yet so open to all mankind,
To come and draw from it's graces
That is freely given from above,
To all that enter by the gateway.

You can feel that something ---
A mystic presence maybe ---
All who come remark the same thing ---
Peace is here, yes, more than that though.

They sense the presence of God,
They know it is a "HOLY PLACE"
Maybe not fully aware, how to find the words,
They all know it has "something special".

Those who stay for a few days,
All say the same as they leave.
"I will be back please God,
There is so much here to treasure".

Peace --- Joy --- Contentment,
Prayer that envelops the mind and soul,
All to give us awareness
Of this special "VALLEY" --- God's precious gift.

REMEMBER MARIAN VALLEY IN YOUR WILL

The Shrine of Our Lady Help of Christians at Marian Valley survives totally on the donations of the faithful. If you would like to help Marian Valley in the future you might consider remembering us in your Will. If you would like to do this, the correct way to put us in your will is: **The Trustees of the Pauline Fathers and Brothers for use at Marian Valley, 2541 Beechmont Rd. Witheren, Qld 4275**

In Michelangelo's masterpiece of sculpture, the Pieta, the Mother seems far too young to be the Mother of the dead Son. Someone said this to Michelangelo, and he replied, 'You don't know anything. Chaste women retain their fresh looks longer than those who are not chaste. The Madonna was without sin, without even the least unchaste desire, and so she was always young.' (F.H. Drinkwater)

The shopkeeper had just handed the Priest a demonstration pair of binoculars. He was getting the distant wall nicely into focus when a passerby, seeing his Roman collar, quietly advised, 'just tell them to move to the front of the Church, Father.'



MARY'S ROSE

NEWSLETTER

Pauline Fathers & Rosary Bouquet



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News from 'Marian Valley'

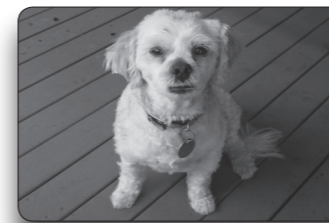
Dear friends in Christ,

The year 2009 has started out being a very busy one at Marian Valley. In January we had a Canonical visitation from the Father General of the Pauline Order, the Vicar General of the Order, and the General Secretary - all from Poland. They were all very happy with the way things were going here at Marian Valley.

The new Monastery is progressing well, with the flooring being the latest addition. We have a long way to go though, and cannot do it without your continued support, spiritual and financial.



New Monestry



Br. Angus

Some of you may not know about a special member of our community at Marian Valley - Br. Angus. Angus is the happiest, most easy going little creature that God has put on this earth (... but I'm a little biased!). Angus is the Monastery Dog. Angus goes around to visit pilgrims, entertain them, and make them welcome - especially children and the elderly. Regulars to Marian Valley are so used to being greeted by Angus that if he is not there then I get the greeting - "Hello Father, where's Angus?" Angus has become a part of Marian Valley - he's the mascot. For those who do not know him please enjoy the photo.

During Lent at Marian Valley we have been promoting the "40 days for Life" campaign. This is a campaign to pray and fast for an end to abortion. Participants sign up to pray outside an abortion clinic in Brisbane - the roster is 24 hours for forty days during Lent. At the time of writing there have been more than 200 people sign up. One of the noticeable things about those praying at the abortion clinic is the large number who pray the Rosary. As a woman and Mother, Our Lady is particularly upset by the destruction of the unborn. Praying for her intercession with the Rosary has born many fruits... not only changing the hearts of those contemplating an abortion, but also by giving great peace and consolation to those praying - even in the midst of ridicule, abuse, and assaults. Please pray the Rosary - the Mother's prayer - for the end of abortion in our land. Remember that Evil flourishes when good men do nothing.



Our Lady of Guadalupe - Patroness of the Unborn

On behalf of Fr Gabriel, Br. Luke and myself, I pray that you and your families be blessed with the joy and peace of the Risen Christ! And always be assured of our prayers.

Fr Columba OSPPE
Prior

The Blessed Virgin, by becoming the Mother of God, received a kind of infinite dignity because god is infinite; this dignity therefore is such a reality that a better is not possible, just as nothing can be better than God. (St Thomas Aquinas)

Healing your Family Tree

The New Age under the guise of religion. Part I

By Father Peter Joseph (2002)

In the state of confusion in the Church today, some people have taken up new age or Protestant fundamentalist ideas without being aware of their real origin or falsity.

A major example of this is the current fad for "Healing the family tree". There is a book with that title by an Anglican psychiatrist Kenneth McAll. Much of the book is quite acceptable to Catholics but the summary on the back cover also states that Dr McAll tells how, through his medical and religious experiences, he has discovered a remarkable new method of healing. He believes that many supposedly 'incurable' patients are the victims of ancestral control. He therefore seeks to liberate them from this control. By drawing up a Family Tree, he can identify the ancestor who is causing his patient harm. He then cuts the bond between the ancestor and patient.

There is myriad literature on the subject, much of it contradictory of each other. Picking the reliable book is a bit like picking a book on astrology or some other nonsensical esoteric topic: which one will you believe? There are so many, and they are irreconcilable with each other!

There are variations galore on the ancestral spirit theme. I have heard some say that if you have a cot death in the family, it means that there was a witch in your ancestry. If you have bowel cancer, it means there was a Freemason, and so on. Some claim to have linked every possible malady to every possible class of ancestral sinner who is the cause of its passing down the line!

Others teach that you or your family are victims of the demon of anger, or the demon of lust, or of gambling, or of drug abuse, or of mental breakdown; in other words, there are special demons who pursue families down the generations to cause particular vices.

Why suffering?

The Apostles too at one time had the common Jewish notion that every affliction could be traced to a specific sin. So it was they asked Our Lord, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus' answer is very enlightening and very important: "It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (Jn 9:3).

Our Lord at another time discounted the idea that certain misfortunes come upon certain people because of their sins, while others are spared because they are less guilty. Referring to a group butchered under Pilate, and to eighteen others killed by a falling tower in Siloam, Jesus said, "Do you think they were worse offenders than all the others in Galilee and in Jerusalem? I tell you, No" (Lk 13:2,4).

Where did the Jews get this notion? Partly from the provisional Revelation given them by God. In the book of Exodus, God says, "I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me" (20:5; 34:7). But is this meant to apply for all time unto the end of the world, like the Ten Commandments? No; many things in the Jewish Revelation were for the Jews only, such as circumcision, animal sacrifices, and other ritual and judicial laws. St John Chrysostom says explicitly that the declaration of punishment unto later generations "is not to be universally applied, but was made with regard to those going out of Egypt" (Homily 56 on St John).

Even within the Old Testament itself, God changed this arrangement. See all of chapter 18 in Ezekiel. God says, "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel." Further on, God says, "Yet you [Jews] say, 'Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?' When the son has done what is lawful and right, he shall surely live. ... The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father. ... The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (18:19-20). Jeremiah 31:29-30 says the same.

If someone in your family has an illness, there is no need to search your family tree for sinners, as the Apostles were trying to do!

Providence

Instructive in this regard is the reply of Our Lord to St Teresa of Avila. In her *Life*, chapter 19, she describes how she was meditating on Psalm 119, 'Righteous are You, O Lord, and upright are Your judgments.' Then she began to wonder, "how You could with justice allow so many faithful servants to remain without those gifts and mercies that You conferred on me... You answered me, O Lord: Do not pry into this but serve Me."

We cannot understand or justify the ways of God. To seek a personal explanation for each major thing will lead to obsession and distrust of God. Such things are not among the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Some of this pseudo-charismatic business is really an attempt to unravel and explain the inexplicable. Why was this man born blind? Why was this girl born handicapped? Why did that good woman die so young of cancer? Why does this family have mental illness? Normally, the answer has to be, "I don't know" or, in a good sense, "God knows." All these and other mystifying things are the result of the inscrutable designs of Divine Providence.

The good of suffering

Padre Pio was asked once why he did not heal a close relative, a young man, of an ongoing illness. He replied, "If he were cured, he would come to love this life too much and his soul would be lost." It is not given to ordinary mortals to know the secret designs of Providence, but a simple story like this one gives us a glimpse into God's ways and into how He draws good from evil, even if we do not see it in this life. The illness of St. Pio's relative was his opportunity to share in the Cross and so save his soul.

In the Catholic schema of things, we need to remember that sin is the greatest of all evils. God has not promised to heal us or release us from all ills in this life, but He has promised absolutely to forgive our sins if we repent.

Original sin

The belief in ancestral or generational curses, etc. is a perversion of the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin, which suffices to explain the evils and imperfections in this world. The remedy is baptismal regeneration and the life of Grace, not special exorcisms and healing rites, etc.

If people make a good Confession of the past, make reparation for their sins, keep the Commandments, receive the Sacraments regularly, and avoid the occult and superstitions, and so on, then they can be certain that any afflictions are not by reason of some occult cause.

Personal responsibility

Some Catholics claiming to expel the influence of troublesome ancestors are really just misled by new age influences, which play upon desperate people's sensitivities and susceptibilities. It is typical of the new agers to teach others to look elsewhere than themselves for the source of their problems. This is a big problem in today's world, namely refusing to take responsibility for our own choices and decisions. So some seek to blame their parents, or ancestors, or evil spirits, or a curse that was placed upon them.

It is also extremely imprudent to tell people afflicted with fears that their problems are caused by demons or ancestors binding them. Such explanations are only calculated to make them worse. What they do need is formation in the virtues of fortitude and trust in God.

We all know that in certain families there is a bigger tendency to alcoholism or gambling or reckless daring or other vices. But we also know that within a single family there are some siblings who are like chalk and cheese. Our basic temperament may be a given, but our character, which is what we do with it, is up to us. If we co-operate with the grace of God, we can overcome temptation, unhealthy proclivities and bad example. We can acquire new virtues. From sinful parents, God can and does produce saints! Only mindless determinism tries to lock people into a box for the rest of their lives.

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Chronicles of Marian Valley by Fr. Gabriel Taylor, OSPPE

Chronicles of Marian Valley by Fr Gabriel Taylor OSPPE

The joyous celebrations in September 2008 began on Saturday 6 September in honour of the Birthday of Our Lady. Celebrant for the Eucharist was Fr. Bernard Gordon, International Spiritual Director of the Missionaries of Charity. There were over 500 pilgrims, with buses from the Gold Coast, Chermside, Caboolture, and Ipswich. Three Priests assisted with Reconciliation. After lunch, Fr. Columba led the Solemn Eucharistic procession to the Grotto of Our Lady of Fatima, where there were devotions and Benediction. After Benediction, Fr. Bernard, Fr. Columba, and Fr. Gabriel blessed the pilgrims before their departure.

On Sunday 14 September the Korean pilgrims, accompanied by Fr. Joseph Ki Hwan Kim, came for Korean Mass in honour of St. Andrew Kim Taegon and the Korean Martyrs. About 400 people were present for the Mass with beautiful harmonies provided by the Korean Choir. After a lunch of Korean food, there was a wonderful demonstration of drums and cymbals, followed by much fun and laughter of the children, with games for everyone.

The Italian community, with over 600 pilgrims, came for Italian Mass in honour of St. Padre Pio on Sunday 28 September. Fr. Mauro Conte C.S. celebrated the Italian sung Mass at the Chapel of St. Pio.

Fr. Dom Caemasco S.V.D. and Fr. Lino Valenti (from Stanthorpe) were also here for the day. After lunch on this warm day of blessed graces, Fr. Mauro led the pilgrims in the praying of the Stations of the Cross.



VI Station of the Cross at Marian Valley.
Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

September also saw us welcoming a bus of elderly Croatian people for Mass, and later in the month a group of Coptic youth for a two day retreat with their priest Fr. Moses.

Whilst in Queensland for their conference (held in Brisbane), member Priests of The Confraternity of Catholic Clergy visited Marian Valley for the Feast of St. Therese of the Child Jesus (1 October). Over 40 Priests were present, accompanied by His Excellency Most Reverend Giuseppe Lazarotto

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Beliefs without foundation

A few years ago, a nun wrote to Bishop Brennan of Wagga Wagga to ask if she could come and do a seminar on 'healing your family tree.' He replied, as he told me himself, that he did not believe in any such doctrine, and that it was contrary to Scripture and the Fathers.

There is a book by an Italian theologian, Father Renzo Lavatori, on the demonology of the Fathers of the Church. In that thorough book, and in other learned tomes on the teachings of the Fathers, you will not find a single Father of the Church who taught anything about evil spirits following your ancestral line, or healing your family tree by identifying the ancestor who is holding you bound.

I would go further and say that no Father, no Doctor of the Church, no Saint, no Pope, no Council ever taught or even implied any such thing. It is a pure fiction without foundation in Sacred Scripture or Sacred Tradition. There is not a word on the subject in the 688 pages of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It is a mythical notion imported from sects outside the Church.

—Apostolic Nuncio, Most Rev. Geoffrey Jarrett- Bishop of Lismore, and Most Rev. Luc Mathys- Bishop of Armidale. After concelebrating Mass and lunch, there was a Eucharistic Procession with a number of the faithful, and devotions at the Grotto of Our Lady of Fatima.

On Saturday 18 October, Fr. Luigi Sabbadin C.S. came to Marian Valley with the Italian Community, for the Annual Pilgrimage in honour of St. Gerard Majella. After Mass in Italian (during which the statue of St. Gerard was at the side of the altar) the statue and relic of St. Gerard were carried in procession to the chapel of St. Gerard, where there were prayers, and blessing of the pilgrims with the relic.

A number of groups visited, or were on retreat throughout October. These included a group of Italian youth reflecting on their journey to World Youth Day, the Catholic Psychiatric Pastoral Carers, with their Chaplain Fr. James Smith, a group from Carrington Retirement Village, and five Anglican Priests for a one-day retreat.

Also in October there were groups from the Multicultural Association of the Gold Coast, and St. Thomas More School. On Saturday 11 October members of the Polish community came with Fr. Stan Lipski for Polish Mass on the anniversary of the installation of the statue of Pope John Paul II.

After 11am Mass on Sunday 2 November, All Souls Day, the congregation went to the First Station of the Cross with Fr. Columba for special prayers for the deceased.

To honour the newly-canonised Indian Saint — St. Alphonsa — 200 pilgrims came with Fr. Thomas for Mass in the Syro-Malabar Rite. Fr Thomas is from N.S.W. After Mass, there were prayers at the chapel of Our Lady of Vailankanni.

Others that visited during November were a group of elderly Polish pilgrims, and a group of elderly Italians. Fifteen young adults from St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish prayed and reflected during their retreat on their journey to World Youth Day.

On Sunday 30 November, volunteers and friends of Marian Valley gathered to celebrate their wonderful efforts in support of the Shrine. Fr. Columba expressed heartfelt thanks for all those who give their support to Marian Valley.

For the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on Monday 8 December, about 200 pilgrims came for 11am Mass. After Mass there were devotions and Benediction.

Fr. Mauro Conte C.S. and the Italian pilgrims were here on 12 December for Italian Mass and the blessing of the new statue and Chapel of St. Lucy. After Mass, the statue was carried to the new Chapel, where there were blessings and prayers.

On Sunday 8 February 2009, we welcomed the Most Reverend Bishop Emeritus John Gerry D.D., who came for Confirmation of 13 young people of home-schooling families.

Over 350 pilgrims came for Our Lady of Lourdes on Wednesday 11 February. Three Priests assisted with the many pilgrims who wanted reconciliation. After lunch Dr. David Van Gend, a GP from Toowoomba, gave a very informative talk entitled "Stem Cells — Hype and Hope". Dr Van Gend is National Director for Ethical Stem Cell Research. After the Eucharistic procession to the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes and Benediction, each pilgrim experienced the joy of being individually blessed with the Blessed Sacrament.

Two groups of students who visited in February were from Grace Lutheran College, and from Trinity College.

The Order of St. Paul The First Hermit

Young men interested in seeking a life of prayer and service to Jesus through Mary might think of the Monks of St. Paul the Hermit.

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