

THE ECCLESTIASTICAL VESTMENTS AND VESSELS

This paper has two parts. In the first part you will find the names and explanations of the vestments. In the second part you will find the vessels or the object used in the church, or by the priest. This information is taken from:

"The Divine Liturgy," by R.Rev. Bishop Tiran Nersoyan
"Tsisagen Pararan," by M. Archbishop Ormanian
"Groni Kirk," by Mesrop Vartabed
"Divine Liturgy," by Arsen Torosian, and various papers.

What does the priest wear while celebrating the Divine Liturgy or performing Baptism, for example?

We will list his vestments in the order in which he puts them on in a small chapel or room on the left (south) side of the church called HANTERTZADOON or AVANTADOON.

The Priest, with the deacon, goes into the vestry where the vestments are kept. Then the several ministers being appared, everyone according to his order, they shall say in antiphon, Psalm 132:

- Priest - "Let Thy priest be clothed with righteousness, and let Thy saints sing with joyfulness."
Deacon - "Lord, remember David, and turn not away Thy face from thine anointed"
Priest - "I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her sairts shall shout for joy, etc. . . ."
Deacon - "Let us pray to the Lord in peace"
And the Priest says twelve (12) DER VOGHORMIAS, "Lord, have mercy," and a private prayer before vesting, -
Priest - "O Jesus Christ our Lord, who art clothed with Light as with a garment, who didst appear upon earth in unspeakable humility make me, Thine unprofitable servant, worthy at this hour, when I make bold to approach the same spiritual service of Thy glory, so that I may divest myself of all ungodliness, which is a garment of defilement, and that I may be adorned with Thy light"
The Deacons shall draw near and shall robe him with the vestments, saying for each vestment,
Deacon - "again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Receive us, save us, and have mercy upon us, O Lord."
Priest - "Blessing and glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, world without end, Amen."
1. After the blessing he shall first put the TAK or Crown upon his head, and say,
"Lord, put upon my head the helmet of salvation that with strength I may fight the enemy, by

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto whom belong glory, dominion, and honour, now and ever, world without end, Amen

Explanation: The Crown (TAK) or the saghavard, is a tall bulbous head dress of any hard material, covered with fine rich silk or velvet cloth. There is a small metal cross on top of the crown. Round or oval metal or embroidered religious designs, as well as precious stones, are often used to adorn it. The saghavard, or tak, is a symbol of salvation. It is the first vestment that the priest puts on when being vested for the Divine Liturgy. He then takes it off until he puts on the other vestments.

2. Then the priest puts on the shabik (tunic) saying, "Clothe me, O Lord with the garment of salvation and with the robe of joyfulness, and surround me with vesture of salvation"

Explanation: The shabik is always made of plain white linen. In shape it is the same as the shabik worn by Tubirs, without the shoulder piece, cuff and hem bands that the latter has. It is a long gown extending down to the ankle with wide sleeves and without waistline. The shabik is a sign of the purity and gladness of heart with which the celebrant and all the congregation should celebrate the Badarak (Divine Liturgy).

3. Then the priest puts on the phorourar (the stole) and says, "Clothe my neck, O Lord, with righteousness, and cleanse my heart from all defilement of sin, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc."

Explanation: The phorourar (stole) is a piece about nine inches wide and four feet six inches long, of the same material as the cape (the shoorchar). At one end it has a round opening for the neck and, (when worn) hangs down in front over the shabik. The phorourar is a sign of the Christian duty of righteousness.

4. Now comes the girdle (THE KODEE) and the priest says, "Let the girdle of faith encircle me round about my heart and my mind, wipe off from them the thoughts of impurity, and cause the power of Thy grace to abide in them at all times"

Explanation: The Kodee, or the girdle is a riband of about two or three inches wide, and long enough to go round the waist. Usually it is of the same material as the cape (shoorchar). It has a buckle in front, and is worn by the celebrant over the shabik and phorourar, at the waist. The Kodee is a sign of faith and spiritual strength, and it represents also the priestly authority of binding and loosing.

5. BAZPAN (Maniple or Cuff)

Priest - "Give strength, O Lord, to my right hand, and wash away all my filthiness; that I be enabled to wait on Thee in cleanness of mnd and body . . . (he repeats this also for the left hand)

Explanation: The Bazpan, or the Maniple is a removable cuff five or six inches wide, and long enough to go over the sleeves of the alb (shabik), round the fore part of the forearm. It is made of the same material as the shourchar. The Bazpans are signs of cleanness and of power, necessary to serve the Lord as he should be served. Each bazpan has a cross upon it.

6. VAKAS (Amice or Ephod)

Priest - "Clothe my neck O Lord with righteousness, and cleanse my heart from all filthiness of sin . . .

Explanation: The Vakas is a hard flexible piece four inches wide and eighteen inches long, covered with the same material as that of the crown, a large linen and two strings sewn at the lower edge of the vakas help place it on the shoulders of the celebrant, behind the neck. The phourourar and the shourchar cover the strings and the linen. The Vakas is the sign of obedience to Christ. Also, it may refer to the words of the Lord, "Take my yoke upon you . . . for my yoke is easy . . ." (See Mat: 11:29-30)

Priest - "Lord, of Thy mercy, clothe me with a bright garment, and protect me against the wiles of the wicked, that I be counted worthy to glorify Thy glorious name."

7. The SHOORCHAR

Explanation: The Shoorchar is a piece semicircular in shape and made of fine rich material of any color or combination of colors, provided one color is dominating. It is worn by the priest or bishop during the Divine Liturgy, or during other services for reading the Gospel or for especial solemnities. Symbolically it represents the glory of the new spiritual life and of the faith, as a shield and defense against the attack of the Evil One.

After having put on all his vestments, the priest says, "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, because He has clothed me with a garment of salvation, and with a vesture of gladness. He has put upon me a crown as upon a bridegroom, and has adorned me like a bride with her jewels. By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then he takes the towel and says, "Cleanse my hands, O Lord, from all filthiness of sin" While the priest is robing the Choir sings Khorhoort Khoren (O Mystery deep, . . .)

With this paper please study Leviticus, VI-10. Ex - 28.39-42. 39-27-28. Ephesians - 6.11-20. Isaiah - 61:10.