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MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2016

## The Cappa Magna in the Light of Nature, Rationality, and Mystery

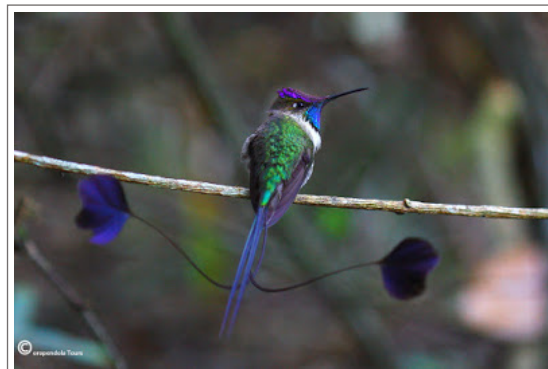
PETER KWASNIEWSKI

### I. The Realm of Subrational Nature

God the Creator is often extravagant in the decorations with which He supplies His creatures. Of course, there are plenty of insects and beasts whose humble appearance enables them to hide effortlessly in the mud or among the rocks or vegetation in which they live. This kind of camouflage gives less scope to the artist's paintbrush. But there are also organisms at the opposite extreme: the ones that are patently designed to be noticed, even *marveled at*.<sup>[1]</sup> The zoologist Adolf Portmann has a lot of interesting things to say about such animal forms and patterns.



Peacock



Marvellous Spatuletail

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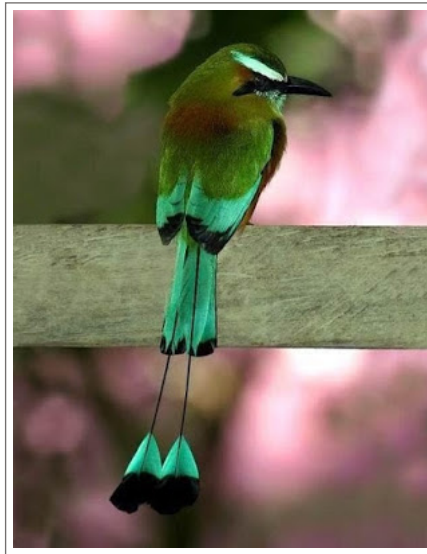
**Richard Chonak**

To submit news, send e-mail  
to the contact team.

### Founded 2005

An essay on the founding of the NLM site: "[A new liturgical movement](#)"

**Shawn Tribe**  
Founding Editor 2005-2013



Peruvian racquet-tailed hummingbird



Frilled coquette hummingbird



Lyrebird



Octopus (sorry about the poor resolution)

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**Jeffrey Tucker**  
Editor 2013-2015

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**Ordo Romanus Primus** ed.  
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**History Of The Roman Breviary**  
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**Liturgica Historica** by Edmund  
Bishop

**Liturgical Prayer: its history  
and spirit** by Dom Fernand  
Cabrol

**The Shape of the Liturgy** by  
Dom Gregory Dix

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Duchesne

**The Mass: A Study in the  
Roman Liturgy** by Adrian  
Fortescue

**The early liturgy: to the time of  
Gregory the Great** by Josef  
Jungmann

**The Mass of the Roman Rite** by  
Josef Jungmann

**The Liturgies of the Religious  
Orders** by Archdale King

**Liturgy of the Roman Church**  
by Archdale King

**The Rites of Eastern  
Christendom** by Archdale  
King

**The Byzantine-Slav Liturgy of  
St. John Chrysostom** by Fr.  
Casimir Kucharek

**Turning Towards the Lord:  
Orientation in Liturgical  
Prayer** by Fr. Uwe-Michael  
Lang

**Liturgical Latin** by Christine  
Mohrmann

**Liturgicae Institutiones** by C.  
Callewaert

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A Comparative Study of the  
Sundays in Proper Seasons  
before and after the Second  
Vatican Council** by Lauren  
Pristas

**The Organic Development of  
the Liturgy** by Alcuin Reid

**Vestments and Vesture** by Dom  
E.A. Roulin

**The Byzantine Liturgy** by H.  
Schulz

**The Sacramentary** by Ildefonso  
Schuster

**The Liturgical Altar** by Geoffrey  
Webb



Blue dragon sea slug



Small spotted genet

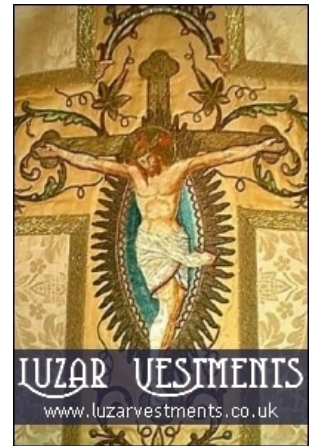


The king of the beasts

Examples of such opulent organisms could be easily multiplied. We may take it as a given, therefore, that in the natural order, humble plainness is not the default position; brilliant colors, intricate patterns, and outrageous structures are just as plentiful. They, too, give glory to God by their very outward show. They are the pomp and circumstance of the dumb creation.

## II. The Realm of Rational Nature

We see that the human body has an order, complexity, and beauty well suited for the life of a rational animal (as St. Thomas nicely argues in *Summa theologiae* I, q. 91, a. 3), but it cannot be denied that it is rather plain compared to the vesture of the foregoing creatures. Making use of our reason, we compensate for and transcend our born condition: in addition to our hairstyles, we wear clothes, lots of them, and lots of different styles with varying meanings.



## Critique & Commentary

**Cardinal Reflections: Active Participation in the Liturgy** by Cardinals Arinze, George, Medina, Pell

**Beyond Vatican II: The Church at a New Crossroads** by Abbe Claude Barthe

**Treasure and Tradition** by Lisa Bergman

**Beyond the Prosaic** ed. Stratford Caldecott

**The Radiance of Being** by Stratford Caldecott

**The Little Oratory: A Beginner's Guide to Praying in the Home** by David Clayton and Leila Marie Lawler

**The Bugnini Liturgy and the Reform of the Reform** by Laszlo Dobszay

**The Restoration and Organic Development of the Roman Rite** by Laszlo Dobszay

**The Reform of the Roman Liturgy** by Msgr. Klaus Gamber

**The Development of the Liturgical Reform** by Nicola Giampietro

**The Banished Heart** by Geoffrey Hull

**Reform of the Reform? A Liturgical Debate** by Fr. Thomas Kocik

**Resurgent in the Midst of Crisis** by Peter Kwasniewski

**The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: A Counterpoint for the History of the Council** by Agostino Marchetto

**The Heresy of Formlessness** by Martin Mosebach

**Looking at the Liturgy: A Critique of its Contemporary Form** by Fr. Aidan Nichols, OP

**A Pope and a Council on the Sacred Liturgy** by Fr. Aidan Nichols

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**Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger** edited by Alcuin Reid

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**A Bitter Trial: Evelyn Waugh and John Cardinal Heenan on the Liturgical Changes**

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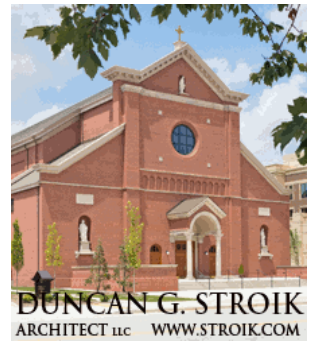
This much is obvious to everyone: *special* clothes are worn on *special* occasions. People at weddings spare no effort to look their best. People at funerals still dress respectably, if not as formally and somberly as in the past. The same holds for important meetings with dignitaries, certain office parties and holiday gatherings, and, at least for opening night, classical concerts or operas. I'm sure other examples could be given. The connection between the level of dressing and the perceived importance of the occasion has remained, even in our democratic times.

Clothing has always taken two steps beyond utility: first, from the cheap and practical to the formal and elegant; second, from the formal and elegant to the showy, splendid, unusual, and even extravagant. And it is this last step that I am most interested in. We do not seem to think it objectionable that opera devotees should look not merely well-groomed but even a bit "over-the-top," as one can see in these examples of the branch of haberdashery known as the opera cape:



Wearing such a cape is rather old-fashioned, I'll admit, but one might still be able to get away with it in a major city without raising too many eyebrows (indeed, it would probably call forth compliments from those who remember a more civilized time – or who can dream of a civilized future).

When we move into the realm of wedding dresses, however, we are definitely in a realm where excess, ornament, drapery, and a certain extravagance are quite normal and expected, even if we should recognize the sinister influence of a money-hungry wedding industry joining forces with an inflated romanticism that thrives in proportion to society's loss of religious orientation. The point is, even in modern Western culture a wedding is usually (and rightly) seen as a most special day, and the bride and bridegroom dress to the hilt for it, particularly the bride.



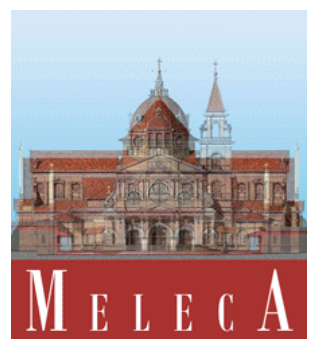
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## Conference Proceedings

**Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church** (Sacra Liturgia 2013)

**Celebrating the Eucharist: Sacrifice and Communion** (FOTA V, 2012)

**Benedict XVI and the Roman Missal** (FOTA IV, 2011)

**Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Music** (FOTA III, 2010)

**Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Art and Architecture** (FOTA II, 2009)

**Benedict XVI and the Sacred Liturgy** (FOTA I, 2008)

**The Genius of the Roman Rite: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives on Catholic Liturgy** (CIEL 2006)

**The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist: 2000 CIEL Proceedings**

**Theological and Historical Aspects of the Roman Missal: 1999 CIEL Proceedings**

**Ministerial and Common Priesthood in the Eucharistic Celebration: 1998 CIEL Proceedings**

**Altar and Sacrifice: 1997 CIEL Proceedings**

**The Veneration and Administration of the Eucharist: 1996 CIEL Proceedings**

## Other Studies

**Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy** by David Berger

**Liturgy and Architecture** by Louis Bouyer

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**Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy** by Denis McNamara

**The Spirit of the Liturgy** by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

**Gregorian Chant: A Guide to the History and Liturgy** by Dom Daniel Saulnier, OSB

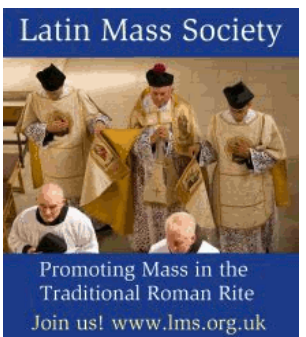
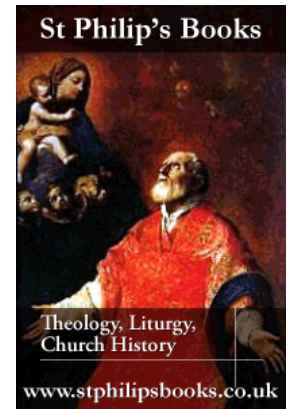
**Four Benefits of the Liturgy** by a Benedictine Monk



### III. The Realm of Supernatural Symbolism

Now, it seems to me that it's not a large step from capes, trains, and other "lyrebird" habiliments to the more colorful and even hyperbolic ecclesiastical clothing characteristic of Catholic tradition. This is not a matter of strutting and showing off, as the ignorant say. It is a simple matter of **dressing in accord with one's metaphysical dignity and as a manifestation of the spiritual beauty of one's office** – let us say, that of a priest, who bears the sacramental character of Christ the High Priest, or that of a bishop, who rules in the name of God over His People, or that of a cardinal, who ministers directly to the pope and gives the Church her pope when the need arises; **dressing for the noble occasion**, let us say a solemn Pontifical Mass, where the faithful behold an image of the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem; **dressing for the One to be honored**, Our Lord Himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords, fairest of the sons of men, awesome, wondrous, and superabundant in grace, and all His company of angels and saints, who deserve far greater reverence, external and internal, than all the kings, queens, and great ones of the earth from the dawn of time until the day of judgment.

With the foregoing in mind, it is easy to see that the *cappa magna* – a garment about which some progressive Catholics make such a ruckus – is a perfectly reasonable and fitting development of a deeply human tendency, intensified by the high accomplishments of European culture, and fully consistent with the logic of creation, the Incarnation, and the grammar of worship as the most special of all special occasions.



**Discovering The Mass** by a  
Benedictine Monk

**The Rationale Divinorum  
Officiorum of William  
Durand of Mende: Books One,  
Two and Three, Four**

**Paléographie musicale XXIII:  
Montecassino, ms. 542**

## Liturgy Books (EF)

**1962 Missale Romanum** (Recent  
altar edition printed in  
Germany)

**1961 Breviarium Romanum**  
(Latin edition of Roman  
Breviary)

**1961 Latin-English Roman  
Breviary** (Baronius Press)

**Liber Brevior** (1954 edition)

**Liber Usualis** (1961-62 edition)

**Rituale Romanum**

**Roman Ritual** (3 volume set)

**The Layman's Missal**

**The Roman Missal 1962**  
(Baronius Press; Summorum  
Pontificum edition)

## Liturgy Books (OF)

**Missale Romanum Editio iuxta  
typicam tertiam** (Latin altar  
edition of modern Roman  
missal)

**Book of the Gospels** (Matching  
edition to Latin Missale  
Romanum)

**Lectionarium** (Latin edition of  
the modern Roman lectionary)

**Shorter Roman Ritual / Rituale  
Parvum** (Latin-English)

**Daily Roman Missal** (hand  
missal in English, 2011)

## Other Liturgical Books

**The Monastic Diurnal** (St.  
Michael's Abbey Press)

**Kyriale** (Solesmes)

**Gregorian Missal** (Solesmes,  
2012)

**Graduale Romanum** (Solesmes,  
1974)

**Adoremus Hymnal** (Ignatius  
Press)

**Simple English Propers**  
(Vernacular propers for the  
English liturgy)

**Ad Completorium** (sample)

## Ceremonial Guides

**The Ceremonies of the Roman**



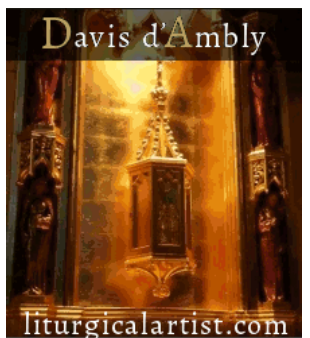
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**Rite Described** (revised in accordance with *Summorum Pontificum* by Alcuin Reid)

**The Celebration of Mass** by J.B. O'Connell

**Rubrics of the Roman Breviary and Missal**

**Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite** by Msgr. Peter Elliott

**Ceremonies of the Liturgical Year** by Msgr. Peter Elliott

**How To Serve - In Simple, Solemn and Pontifical Functions** by Dom Matthew Britt

## Vocations

**The London Oratory**

**The Toronto Oratory**

**The Oxford Oratory**

**The Birmingham Oratory**

**Canons Regular of St. John Cantius**

**Our Lady of the Atonement** (Anglican Use Parish)

**Our Lady of Walsingham** (Anglican Use Parish)

**Fraternity of St. Peter**

**Institute of Christ the King**

**Clear Creek Benedictines**

**Silverstream Priory** (Benedictines, Diocese of Meath, Ireland)

**Abbaye St-Madeleine du Barroux**

**Monastère Saint-Benoît**

**Abbaye Notre Dame du Randol**

**Benedictines of Norcia** (Norcia, Italy)

**St. Louis Abbey** (Benedictines, St. Louis, USA)

**St. Michael's Abbey, Farnborough** (Benedictines, Hampshire, England)

**Heiligenkreuz** (Holy Cross Cistercian Abbey, Austria - Solemn 'Reform of the reform' liturgy)

**Canons Regular of the New Jerusalem**

**Institute of St. Philip Neri**

**Fraternity of St. Vincent Ferrer** (French only)

**Canons Regular of the Mother of God**

**Apostolic Administration of St. John Vianney**

**Institute of the Good Shepherd** (and *Séminaire Saint Vincent de Paul*)

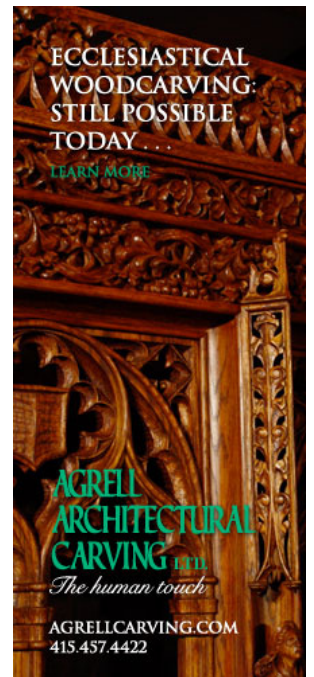


(Just had to throw this one in for fun.)

As Catholics, we rejoice in the natural beauty of colors and forms; we rejoice in the rational capacity to highlight personal dignity, elevated office, and earnest ritual; we rejoice in the supernatural symbolism that draws our minds beyond this earthly realm to the heavenly kingdom and its majestic Sovereign. It is a perfect example of the harmony of nature and grace – the hidden depths of visible nature and the sensible signs of invisible grace.

### NOTE

[1] I do not deny that certain animal forms and patterns have utilitarian benefits, too, but I concur with Portmann that the most important value is precisely their "presentation value," namely, what they convey to other organisms. They are meant to be seen and appreciated, to convey something to others, whether friend or foe. It is an irrational likeness of rational discourse.



**Carmelite Monks of Wyoming**  
(Carmelite rite)

**Riamont Institute of the Holy Cross** (Closely tied to French Catholic Scouting Movement)

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**Missionary Society of Divine Mercy** (Toulon, France)

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**Servi Jesu et Mariae** (Austria; bi-ritual)

**Oasis of Jesus the Priest** (Spain)

**Fraternity of the Divine Mercy**  
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(Scotland and New Zealand)

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(France)

**Opus Mariae Matris Ecclesiae**  
(Italy)

**St. Michael's Abbey** (Norbertine Fathers, California)

**Abbey of Sant' Antimo**  
(Norbertine Canons, Italy)

**Marian Sisters of Santa Rosa**

## Organizations & Lay Societies

**Latin Liturgy Association**

**International Una Voce Federation**

**St. Colman's Society for Catholic Liturgy** (Ireland)

**Society for Catholic Liturgy**

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(Organizers of the Annual Chartres Pilgrimage)

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**The Pugin Society**

**Church Music Association of America**

**Adoremus: Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy**

**Saint Gregory Society**

**Pro Missa Tridentina** (Germany)

**Latin Mass Society of England and Wales**

**Latin Mass Society of Ireland**

**Capella Sancti Servatii Nunhem**

### UPDATE (1/11/16 at 6:22 EST)

A reader drew my attention to this pertinent passage in the Prophet Isaiah:

In the year that King Uzziah died, **I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of His robe filled the temple.** Above Him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. (Is 6:1-4)

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59 Comments New Liturgical Movement

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**Fr. Dn. S. Miller** · 5 days ago

Take note cardinals and bishops, viz., Cardinal Burke in church wears the biretta when seated, NOT when in procession or standing.

2 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



**Matthew Roth** → Fr. Dn. S. Miller · 5 days ago

Yes, as only those in sacred vestments wear it inside...

1 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



**John** · 5 days ago

Cappa magnas are where the traditional crosses over into embarrassing medieval reenactment. It doesn't highlight dignity and draw us into the Mass. For 99% of the population, it screams Comic Con and draws us out of the Mass much like hoverboards would.

Yes, long dresses are worn at weddings. By the bride! Talk about gender confusion! Many of the examples from the animal kingdom are likewise gender specific. Used inappropriately, an otherwise appropriate dress can send the wrong message. If cappa magnas don't cross the line, there is no line.

^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



**ProfKwasniewski** → John · 5 days ago

There is no gender confusion here, since my examples are drawn from both sexes. Indeed, special vesture will always be connected with the male or female sex, since any individual will always be one or the other, pace post-modernist lunacy.

In any case, you are not engaging at all with the arguments presented in this essay, but simply expressing your personal discomfort or shock at a certain "medieval custom" (said pejoratively). What if others feel differently? The argument cannot proceed on the basis of emotions or sentiment alone.

1 ^ | ▾ · Reply · Share ›



**Christianussum** → John · 5 days ago

It is a rather plainer garment than those worn by the head of state, the majority of the legislature and most of the great offices of state in my country. Their ceremonies have no spiritual value and are little more than



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