

The alb and the amice



The alb is a long, white garment, which flows from shoulders to ankles, and has long sleeves extending to the wrists. (The word *alb* means “white.”) The alb was a common outer garment worn in the Graeco-Roman world . Some modern style albs have collars which preclude the necessity for amice.

The amice is a liturgical vestment consisting of an oblong piece of white linen that is worn around the neck and shoulders and partly under the alb. It measures 36" x 24" with two 36" strings of twill tape. Originally, the purpose of the amice was as a neckcloth to protect the valuable chasuble and stole. Until 1972, the amice was an obligatory vestment. Now it is optional, provided that the alb worn by the priest does cover all of his clothes underneath.

The spiritual purpose of the alb reminds the priest of his baptism, when he was clothed in white to signify his freedom from sin, purity of new life, and Christian dignity. The Book of Revelation describes the saints who stand around the altar of the Lamb in Heaven as “These are the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14). In the same way, the priest must offer the Mass with purity of body and soul, and with the dignity befitting Christ’s priesthood.