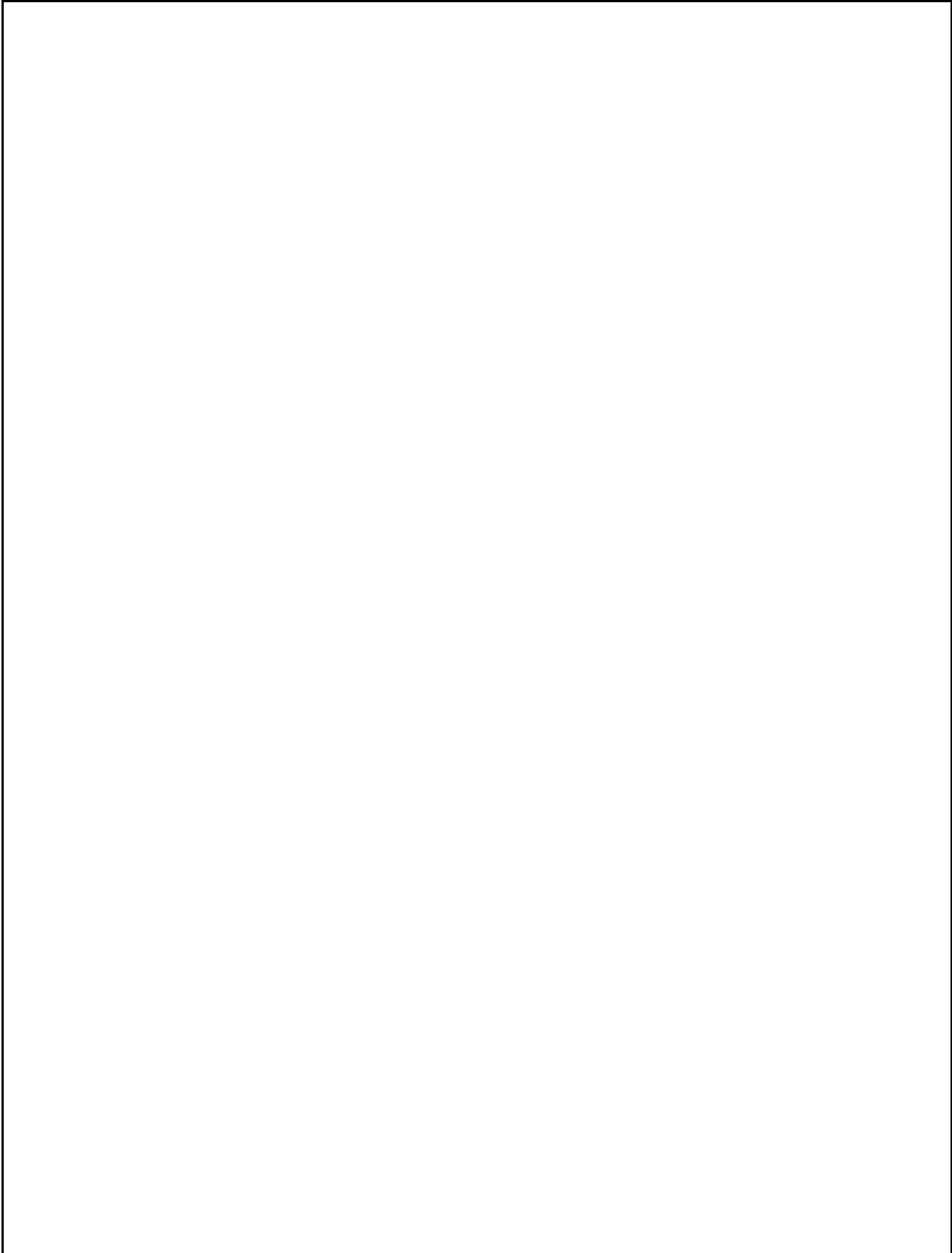


Adventures in Vestments

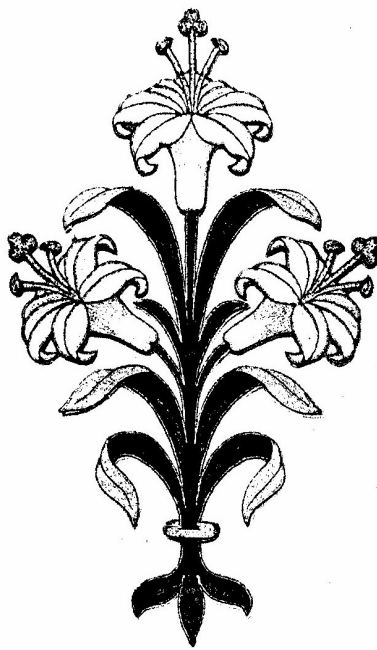
A Basic Guide to
Making Church Vestments

Book 1
Vestments Made Without an Edge Trim

by Judy Fradl



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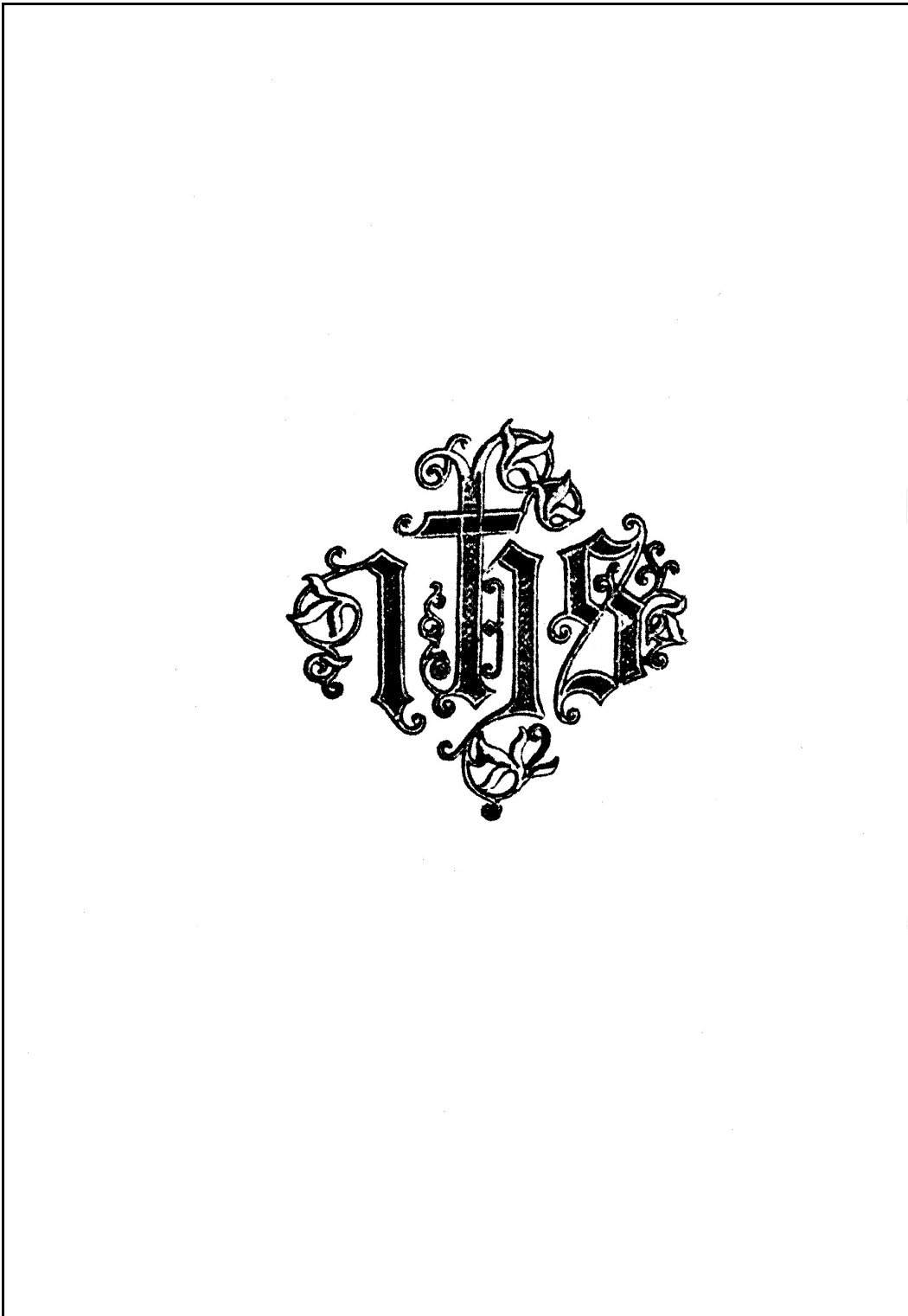


Figure 2

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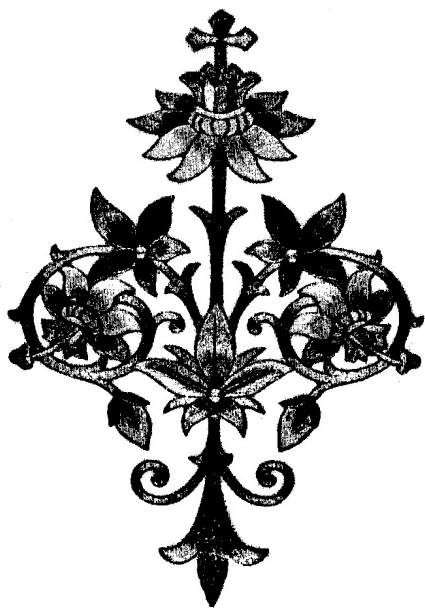


Figure 3

INTRODUCTION

In 1980 I began my wonderful adventure into the realm of church furnishings and vestment. A new small regional parish was being formed. If any of the women arrived early for Sunday Mass, they were handed either an iron to press the altar linens or a needle and thread to do mending. I was better at sewing than ironing.

It wasn't long before my curiosity about vestment styles and how they were made was aroused. I began studying construction details of vestments as I mended and relined them, searched the libraries for more information on vestments, and made master patterns from old vestments and information gleaned from my library search.

My mentor was my parish priest. He was a perfectionist, had exquisite taste and a very deep love for liturgical things. He persuaded me to learn vestment making and design, and critiqued my work as I progressed. He encouraged me to maintain a part time vestment service for priests across the United States and to write instructions to teach others to make vestments.

Over the years I have found many books written on church embroidery and concerning vestments in general but almost none with good detailed construction techniques, particularly for Roman style vestments. It is my hope that this manual will begin to fill this void, give practical tips to help overcome problems I encountered when I began and will encourage others to learn the art of vestment making and design. Although my book is written from a Catholic perspective, the techniques can be of help to sewers of others Faiths.

Instructions given are a general guide to help you get started. As you learn and work with vestments, you may find other techniques that may serve you better. Keep an open mind and be willing to learn different ways of doing things. Various methods sometimes have to be used with different fabrics and trims. Since most of us have had to learn by trial and err, we're all learning together. If you have any questions write or call me, I'll try to answer them.

I'm always interested in networking with others who are involved in church sewing and the liturgical arts. If you have any thoughts or suggestions I would welcome them. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

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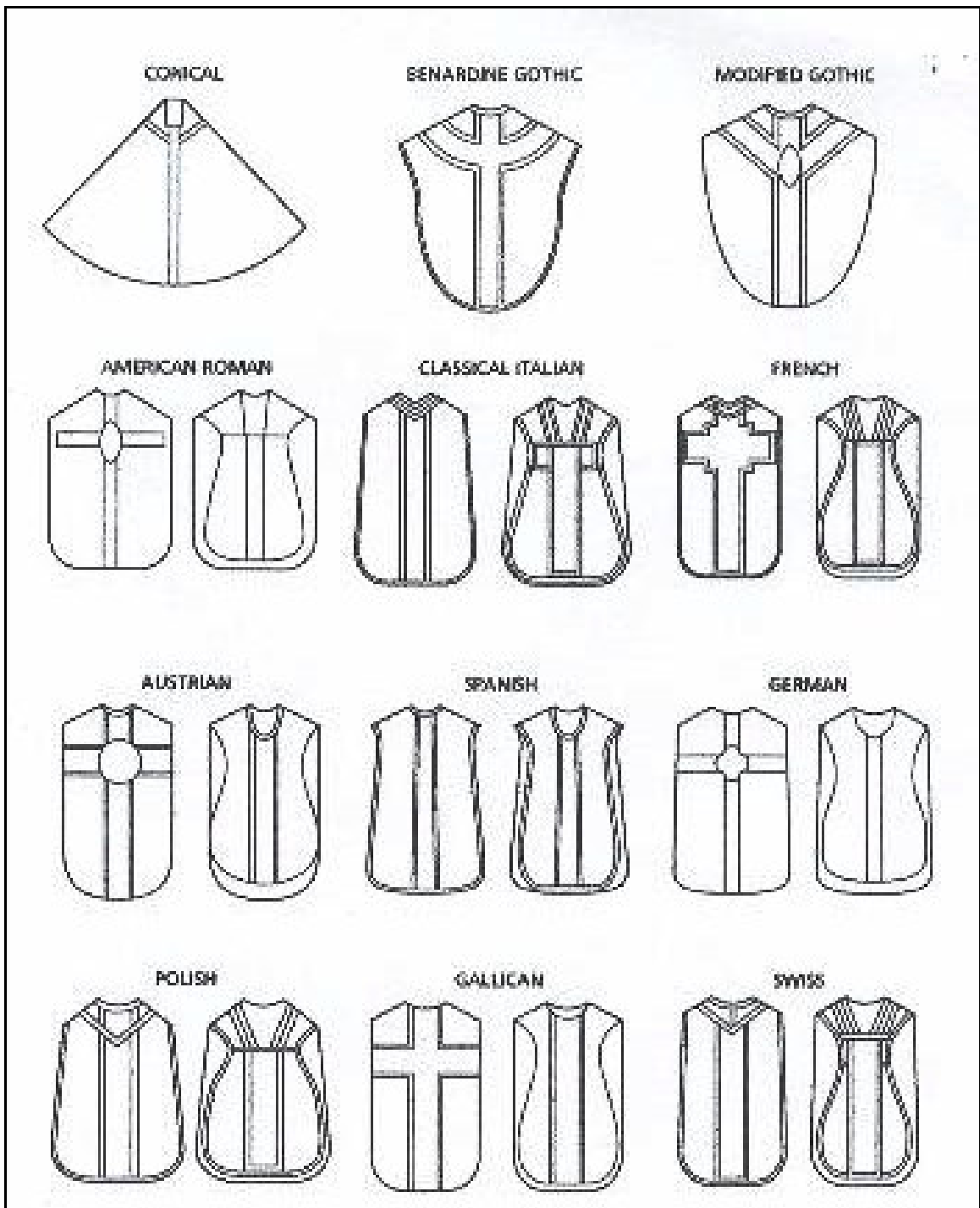


Figure 4

Vestment Styles

VESTMENT STYLES

There are two broad categories of vestments widely used in the Roman Catholic church, the Gothic and the Roman. They are most recognized by the shape of the chasuble. The Gothic has a full flowing chasuble that hangs over the shoulder to at least the elbow, sometimes to the wrist. The Roman style has a narrow stiff backed chasuble that just covers the shoulder.

In addition to these two classifications, there is the Conical chasuble, sometimes called the Ancient Gothic which was worn exclusively up until about the twelfth century. It is occasionally used today and is the preferred style in some monastic communities. It has a very full cone shaped chasuble which is joined with a front seam and has a neck opening cut out. It is a rather awkward vestment to wear because of the amount of fabric in the chasuble that must be folded onto the priests arms.

Within the Gothic style category there are a number of varying types including the Gothic Revival, the Modified Gothic, the Standard Gothic, Full Gothic, and the Bernardine. The Modified Gothic is the narrowest and hangs to about the elbow, while the Full Gothic comes to about the wrist. The Gothic style has a shoulder seam and can either be rounded at the bottom or come to a point.

Six well known styles of Roman vestments are: The Classical Italian, American Roman, French, German, Austrian, and Spanish. There are also a number of lesser known types including: the Swiss, Polish, Gallican, Irish, Belgian, and Brazilian.

In the Classical Italian, American Roman, French, Swiss, Polish, and Irish the back of the chasuble comes over the shoulders to form a front yoke that is sewn to the front of the chasuble across the chest. The Polish is wider in width and shorter in length than the Italian and French.

The German, Austrian, Gallican, Spanish, Brazilian, and Belgian have a rounded neckline and a shoulder seam that joins the front and back. The Brazilian chasuble has an exaggerated Spanish shape.

In each of these styles the accessory pieces of the vestment sets are matched in style and trim to the chasuble. A basic low Mass set consists of five pieces: chasuble, stole, maniple, chalice veil and burse; although in many modern churches the maniple is not used.

COMMENTARY ON VESTMENT STYLES

In the Catholic Church the full conical (ancient Gothic) chasuble was worn until about the 12th or 13th century. During this century the chasuble became so heavy and cumbersome that the priest had a problem raising his arms above his head at the Consecration of the Mass. It was, therefore, gradually cut down into what we know as the Roman chasuble.

The Roman style was then used almost exclusively until of the 19th century when the “Gothic Revival” chasuble was introduced by such men as Augustus Pugin, Gilbert Scott, and Voillet-le-Duc. This gothic chasuble, unlike the ancient Gothic vestment, was designed with a shoulder seam. From that time on the Gothic style was again used in the Catholic Church but the Roman style still predominated. During the 1940' s the Gothic vestment continued to gain popularity so that by the 1950' s both the Gothic and Roman styles were very acceptable.

With the onset of Vatican II in the 1960' s and the implementation of the “Spirit of Vatican II” in the 1970' s the idea was promoted that all traditions were to be discarded and anything that came before Vatican II was to be rejected. In the mad rush to “**be Modern**” the churches were sacked and the church treasures in the form of the church furnishings--altars, statues, brassware,-- music, books, sacred vessels, and vestments were literally thrown into the trash heap.

This decade in the church reminds one of the Chinese emperor who decided that all history in China should begin with him. To eliminate all vestiges of the past he burned or destroyed all the books, art treasures, and everything that was made prior to his reign. We also find many parallels between the present reforms and the time of the Reformation in England.

During this confused time period of the 1970' s the Roman style vestments fell into disfavor in the modern Catholic Church because they were associated with the more traditional pre-Vatican II era. They were replaced with modern Gothic vestments, many of which were made with bad, gaudy, indecorous designs, and cheap inappropriate materials and trims.

Those priests in the modern church who may have preferred the Roman style vestment avoided wearing them for fear of being accused of rejecting Vatican II. Many traditional priests, on the other hand, totally rejected all Gothic vestments because they associated them with the badly designed “Garbage Gothic” brought in with the church reforms.

In the last few years there has been a very gradual change to a slightly more tolerant attitude toward the use of the traditionally styled vestments and church furnishings in the modern church. Some priests are now able to occasionally wear Roman style vestments without reproach. On the other hand, traditionally minded priests are more accepting of well-designed Gothic vestments.

I personally believe there is a place in Catholic Churches for well-designed vestments in both the Roman and Gothic styles that add to the beauty of the service.