

# Rome Priests

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Cardinal Poletti's letter makes the cassock or religious habit obligatory for liturgical and sacramental functions.

is obligatory in liturgical celebrations, in the administration of the sacraments, in the exercise of preaching," said the letter. "It is heartily recommended in the ambit of one's pastoral ministry."

"Cassock or religious habit

Clerical dress is also required for seminarians once they have been admitted to candidacy to the priesthood or to their first religious profession.

Seminarians from many countries study in Rome and most wear secular dress.

Cardinal Poletti commented in his letter on why the pope directed his comments on clerical clothing to the Diocese of Rome rather than to the entire world.

The pope "feels the duty to address himself, as bishop of Rome, first of all to the closest sons and brothers, directly involved with him in a mission of evangelization which is nourished and expressed in love," said the cardinal.

Cardinal Poletti said that the specific norms which he promulgated for the clergy of Rome had been approved and authorized by the pope in a meeting with the Rome

vicar on Sept. 27.

The current Code of Canon Law (Canon 136) prescribes that "all clerics are bound to wear a becoming clerical garb according to the legitimate local customs and the regulations of the Ordinary."

Pope John Paul II has spoken out several times on the importance of distinctive dress for priests and religious as a sign of their consecration to spiritual values.

# Pope's Letter

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character of sign, which distinguishes him from the secular environment and brings to light the eschatological end of the religious life. The garb, therefore, is useful to the ends of evangelization and leads to reflection on the reality which we represent in the world, and the primacy of the spiritual values which we affirm in the existence of man. Through this sign, it becomes easier for others to arrive at the mystery, of which we are bearers, of him to whom we belong and whom we want to announce with all our being.

I do not ignore the motivations of a historical, environmental, psychological or social order which can be proposed to the contrary. I could nevertheless say that motivations of an equal nature exist in its favor. I must however point out above all that contrary reasons or claims, confronted objectively and serenely with a religious sense and with the expectations of the majority of the people of God, and with the positive fruit of the courageous witness also of the garb, appear more of a purely human character than ecclesiastical.

In the modern secular city where the sense of the sacred is so frighteningly weakened, the people also need these calls to God, which cannot be hidden without a certain impoverishment of our priestly service.

On the strength of these considerations, I feel the duty, as bishop of Rome, to address myself to you, Lord Cardinal, who most closely shares my cares and concerns in the governance of my diocese, in order that, in accord with the Sacred Congregations for Clergy, for Religious and secular institutes, and for Catholic education, you may wish to study opportune initiatives destined to favor the use of clerical and religious garb, promulgating in this regard the necessary orders and taking care of their application.

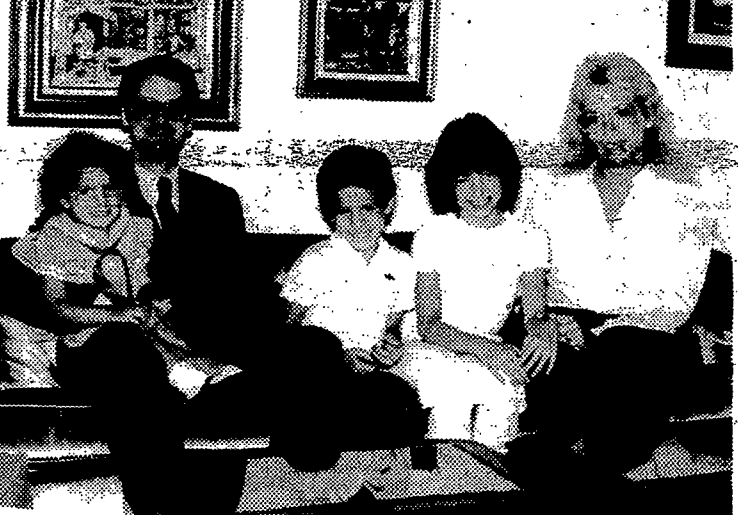
In invoking on you, Lord Cardinal, and on the entire Diocese of Rome the omnipotent assistance of the Lord through the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin "salus populi Romani," I impart from the heart my apostolic blessing.

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