MASS Explained

Available on the iPad App Store

FR. ALEJANDRO IS EXCITED AS HE ENTERS THE CHURCH. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME HE WILL BE CELEBRATING MASS. IN THIS PLAY, WE FOLLOW FR. ALEJANDRO AS HE VESTS FOR MASS AND AT THE SAME TIME LEARN THE NAMES OF HIS GARMENTS.

CHARACTERS:

Narrator: 1 Adult **Fr. Alejandro:** 1 male child, no spoken parts

Narrator: Fr. Alejandro is very nervous. He arrives at St. Mary's Church about half an hour before Mass begins. He has been to Mass many times, but this is the first time he will be on the other side of the altar. Fr. Alejandro was just ordained a priest and today is the day he will say his first Mass.

Fr. Alejandro walks into the *sacristy* and closes the door behind him. *(Child pretends to enter a room and close the door)* The *sacristy* is a special room in a church where all the clothes and objects for Mass are kept. Fr. Alejandro is amazed at all the drawers and cabinets which are neatly labeled with their contents. There are so many cabinets that they almost touched the ceiling. Fr. Alejandro has to arch his back to be able to read the one at the top. *(Child arches back and pretends to read label on cabinet)*

Q: What do you call the place in the church where the objects for Mass are kept? Sacristy

It's about 5 minutes before Mass begins and Fr. Alejandro gets ready. The first thing he does is wash his hands. *(Child pretends to wash hands)* The Mass is a sacred meal and just like eating a meal at home, we should wash our hands first. While washing his hands, Fr. Alejandro says a special prayer to God. He says: "Give strength to my hands, Lord, to wipe away all stain, so that I may be able to serve you in purity of mind and body."

This is one of many prayers Fr. Alejandro will say as he gets ready for Mass. He learned all these prayers and how to celebrate the Mass while he was in the *seminary*. The seminary is a special school, like a university, that instructs students and prepares them to serve in the Church.

Fr. Alejandro studied there for many years and even traveled to Italy to study in Rome before he was ordained as a priest.

Q: What do you call the school where future priests go to learn? Seminary **What is the first thing Fr. Alejandro did to get ready for Mass?** Wash his hands

CONTINUED

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Fr. Alejandro then dries his hands on a towel next to the sink *(Child pretends to dry hands)*. He is now ready to put on the clothes reserved for deacons and priests. These clothes are very special and they have unfamiliar names that we probably wouldn't recognize. The clothes that a priest wears are called vestments.

The vestments are very different from anything we would see people wearing in our town today, but they are very similar to the clothes people wore almost 2000 years ago in Rome. Fr. Alejandro goes to the closet and the first vestment he puts on is called and alb. An alb looks like a long white robe and is made of linen. It's so long, it goes all the way down to his ankles. It looks just like the robes used by the Romans a long time ago. As he puts on the alb, Fr. Alejandro says another prayer he learned in the seminary. *(Child pretends to put on the alb)*

Q: What do you call the white long robe the priest wears? Alb

Fr. Alejandro is very thin. So much so, that the alb fits over him like a tent and flaps in the breeze that is blowing through the sacristy. In order to make it fit more snugly, Fr. Alejandro puts on the next vestment. He opens a long drawer that has a label that reads *"cincture."*

A cincture is a long white, rope-like cord with tassels at the ends. Fr. Alejandro carefully takes out the long cord and wraps it around his waist. He ties it in the front and as he does this, he says another prayer. *(Child pretends to tie a rope around his waist and tie it in the front)*

Q: What do you call the long white cord that a preist ties around his waist? Cincture

So far, the alb and the cincture have both been white. Now Fr. Alejandro is going to put on a very colorful vestment. All the way at the bottom, Fr. Alejandro opens a drawer full of colorful cloth. There is beautiful red, purple, white, green and rose colored cloth. He bends down and takes out a long purple cloth called a *stole*. A stole is an embroidered band of cloth that is about three meters long and 10 centimeters wide and looks like a scarf. Fr. Alejandro's grandmother sewed all the stoles that are used in St. Mary's.

He remembers as a little boy seeing his grandmother embroider little crosses, lambs and other symbols with such love and patience. He never dreamed that he would now be putting one on to serve as priest. His grandmother would be so proud! Fr. Alejandro kisses the cross in the middle of the stole and places it around his neck as he says another prayer he learned in seminary. He lets the ends of the stole fall all the way down and they almost touch the floor! *(Child pretends to put on stole)*

Q: What do you call the long scarf-like vestment a priest wears around his neck? Stole

There are only a few minutes before Mass is scheduled to begin! Fr. Alejandro only has one more vestment to put on. This one is his favorite! It is bright and colorful and has a beautiful design on the front. Fr. Alejandro goes to the closet and picks out a large garment called a *chasuble*.

There are many of them in the closet but Fr. Alejandro chooses the one that is the same color as his stole—purple. The chasuble is a big round cloth with a hole cut in the middle for the head. It reminds him of the ponchos he used to see on TV in old movies. Putting on the chasuble is tricky. He has to lift it over his head until he finds the hole. Then he sticks his head through. He then adjusts the chasuble so the embroidered decoration rests on the front of his chest. *(Child pretends to put on chasuble)*

Q: What do you call the outermost garment a priest wears that looks like a poncho? Chasuble

While Fr. Alejandro is vesting for Mass, the two altar servers are busy preparing the altar. They take out everything Fr. Alejandro will need to celebrate Mass. Among the things they take out to the church are two very sacred vessles. The reason that they are so important is that they will be in contact with the bread and the wine that will become the Body and Blood of Jesus during the Mass.

The first is the *chalice*. The chalice is a beautifully decorated cup that will hold the wine. The chalice used in St. Mary's is made of gold by a local artist who works in metal. The chalice has many decorations that remind Fr. Alejandro of the paintings he saw while he was in Rome. The other important object is called a *paten*. The paten is a dish that will hold the bread during the consecration. It too has many beautiful and intricate decorations and is also made of gold.

Q: What do you call the cup that a prist uses to celebrate Mass? Chalice

Q: What is the name used to describe the small dish that will touch the consecrated host during Mass? Paten

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Fr. Alejandro says a final prayer as he opens the door of the sacristy. He peeks into the church and sees that it is very crowded. *(Child pretends to peek through door).* It's just a few days before Christmas and the anticipation of the great day makes everyone happy. Fr. Alejandro's entire family is sitting in the front pew. His little sister winks at him and he winks back. His mom is crying with tears of joy while his dad has a smile from ear to ear.

Fr. Alejandro walks to the back of the church and gets ready for the choir to sing the entrance chant. As they begin to sing, Fr. Alejandro takes his first steps down the long center aisle of St. Mary's Church. Many of his friends are there and they all smile at him as he walks toward the altar. He is nervous but at the same time very excited. He is honored that God has chosen him to serve as priest.

It's a big task, but Fr. Alejandro is looking forward to serving God and his community. This is a day that Fr. Alejandro will never forget!

Q: Can you name all the vestments in order that Fr. Alejandro put on to celebrate Mass? Alb, Cincture, Stole, Chasuble

Q: What do you call the school a person attends to become a priest? Seminary

Q: What is the name of the special room in a church where the objects and clothes used at Mass are kept? Sacristy

Q: Can you name the cup the priest uses to celebrate Mass? Chalice

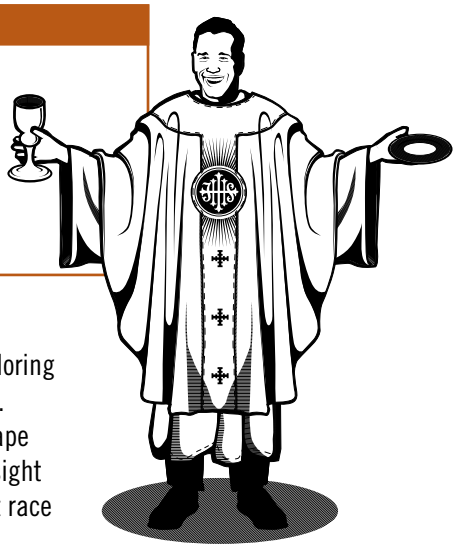
Q: Can you name the dish the priest uses to celebrate Mass? Paten

END

CRAFT PROJECT: FR. ALEJANDRO PAPER DOLL

MATERIALS:

1. Paper doll pages printed on a thick paper
2. Crayons
3. Scissors
4. Tape



STEPS :

1. Distribute the coloring sheets and crayons. Suggestion: Keep tape and scissors from sight so students will not race to finish!

2. Encourage them to color the chasuble and stole the same color: red, green, purple rose or white. The "IHS" symbol and central trim can be any color they wish. What is the IHS symbol? From the beginning of the third century, the names of *Jesus* are shortened either by abbreviations or contractions and can be seen in embroidered inscriptions. The emblem IHS is often used in vestments and baked into altar bread and is derived from the first three letter of "Jesus" in Greek. A common misunderstanding is that it represents "I Have Suffered".

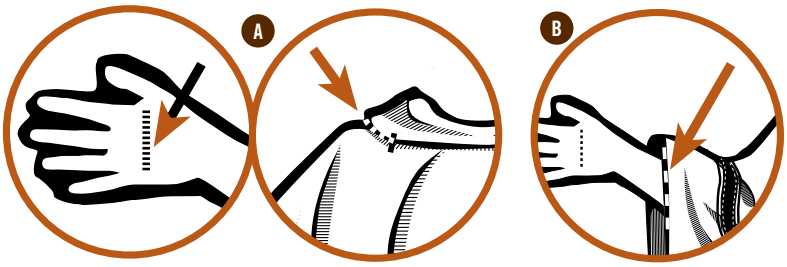
3. After coloring is complete, use child-safe scissors and have the children cut out the paper doll, clothing and accessories.

4. Cut slits in the palms of the priest's hands to fit the tabs for the chalice and paten. Cut slits around the neck of the alb to accommodate the stole. *(see illustration A below)*

5. Cut slits on the cuffs *(indicated by dotted white line)* around the alb so the hands can poke through *(see illustration B below)*

6. Fold the tabs to vest the priest in the order mentioned in the story. Remember, the stole goes below the chasuble, not on top of it. Tape the tabs.

7. A coloring page is available for children who do not have the manual skills to complete this art project.



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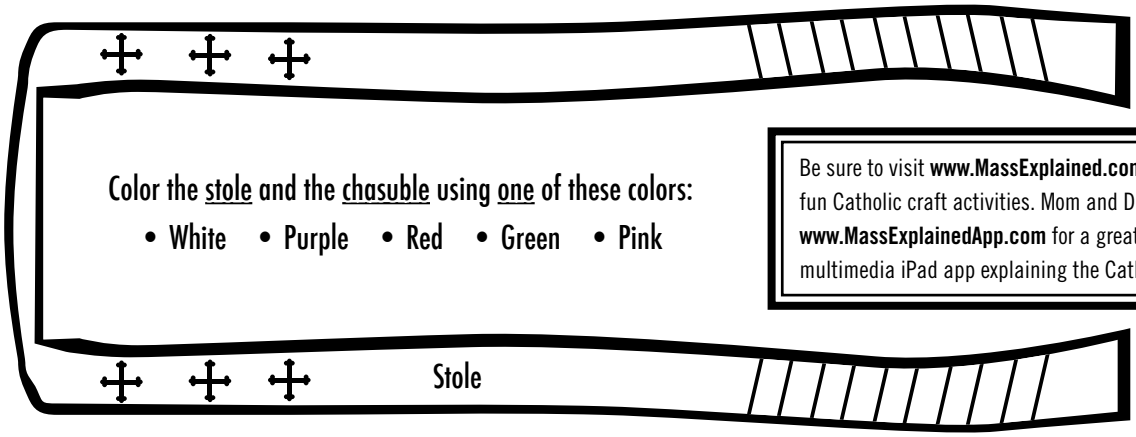

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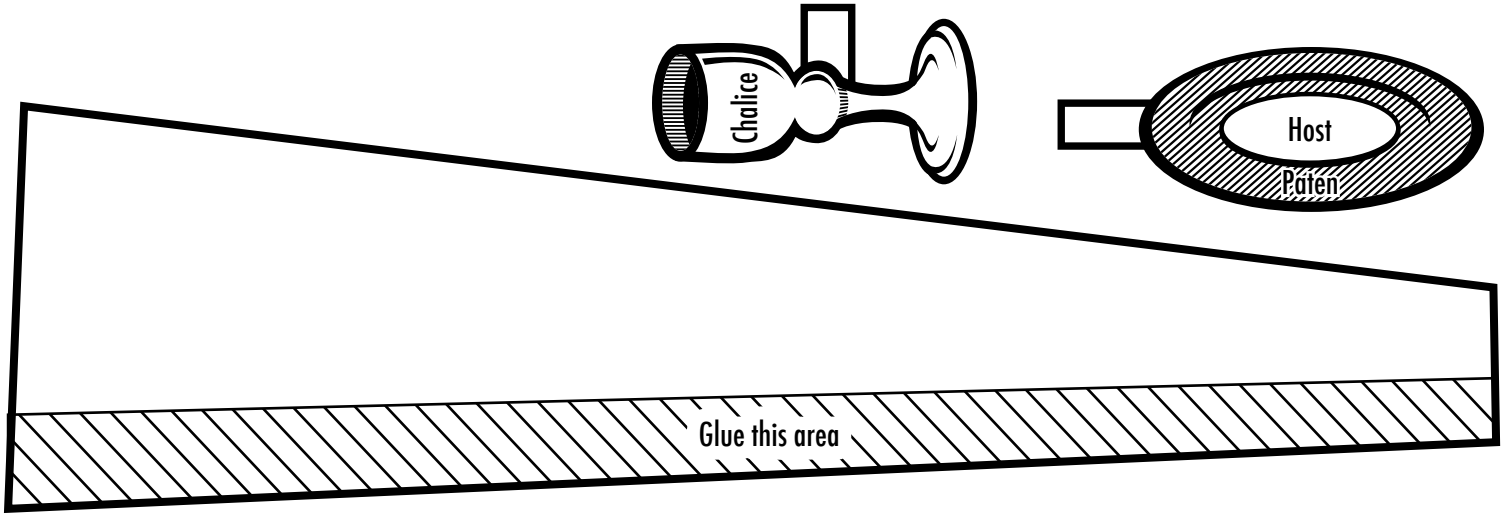
The object of the *Catholic Words Memory Match* card game is to turn over matching pairs of cards. Each deck has 52 cards—that's 26 pairs of bright and colorful illustrations created just for this game.



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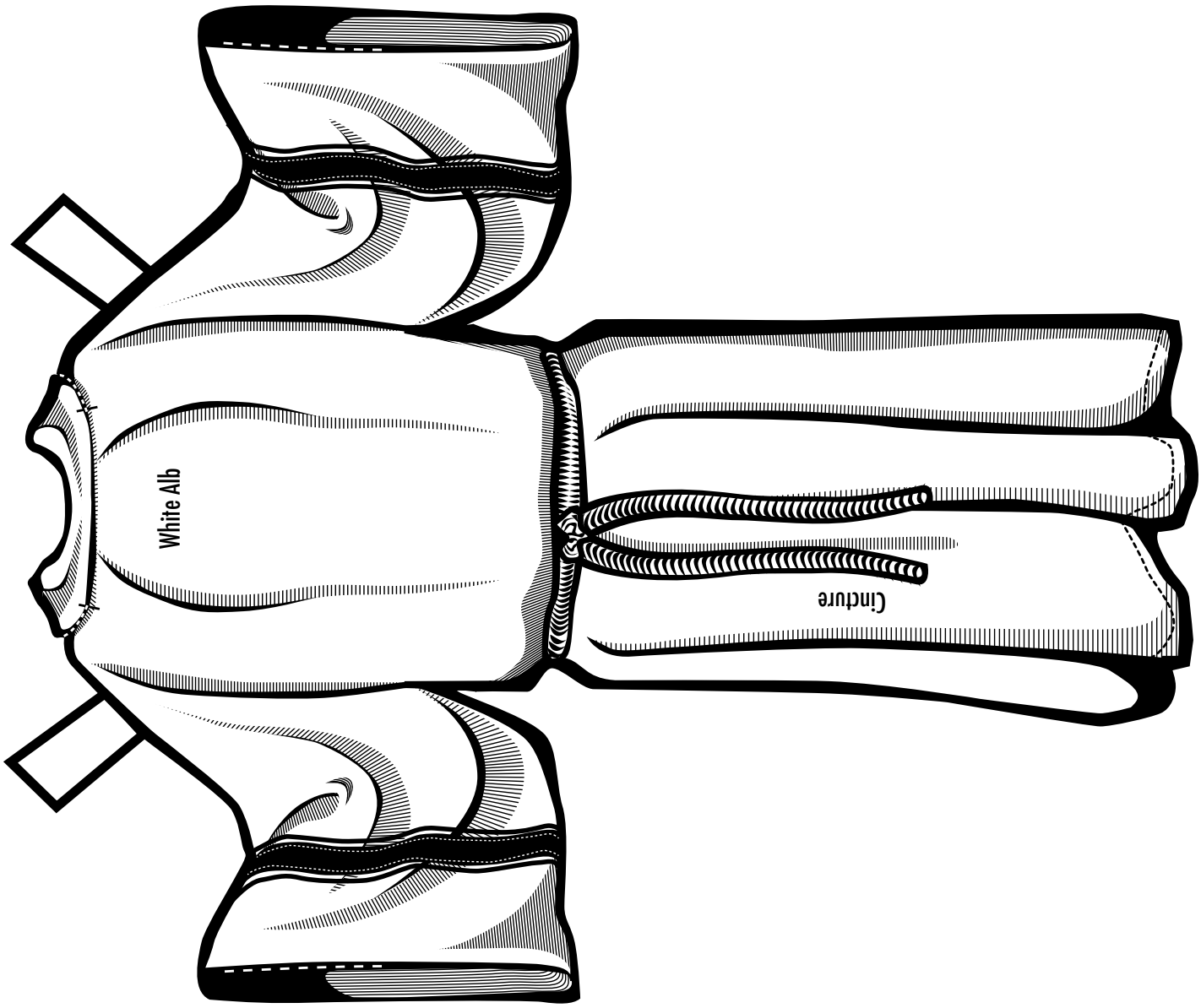

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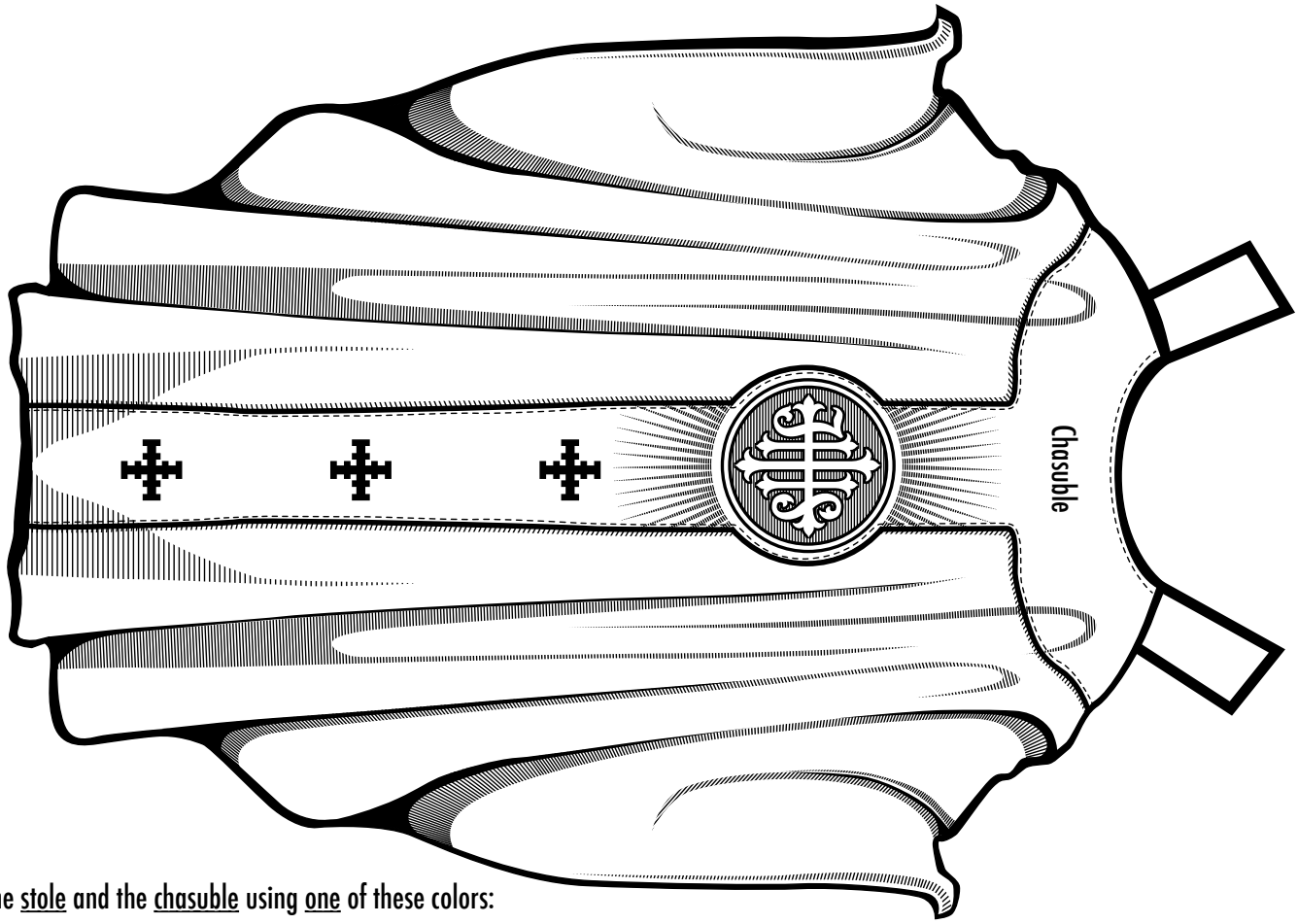

Color the stole and the chasuble using one of these colors:

• White • Purple • Red • Green • Pink

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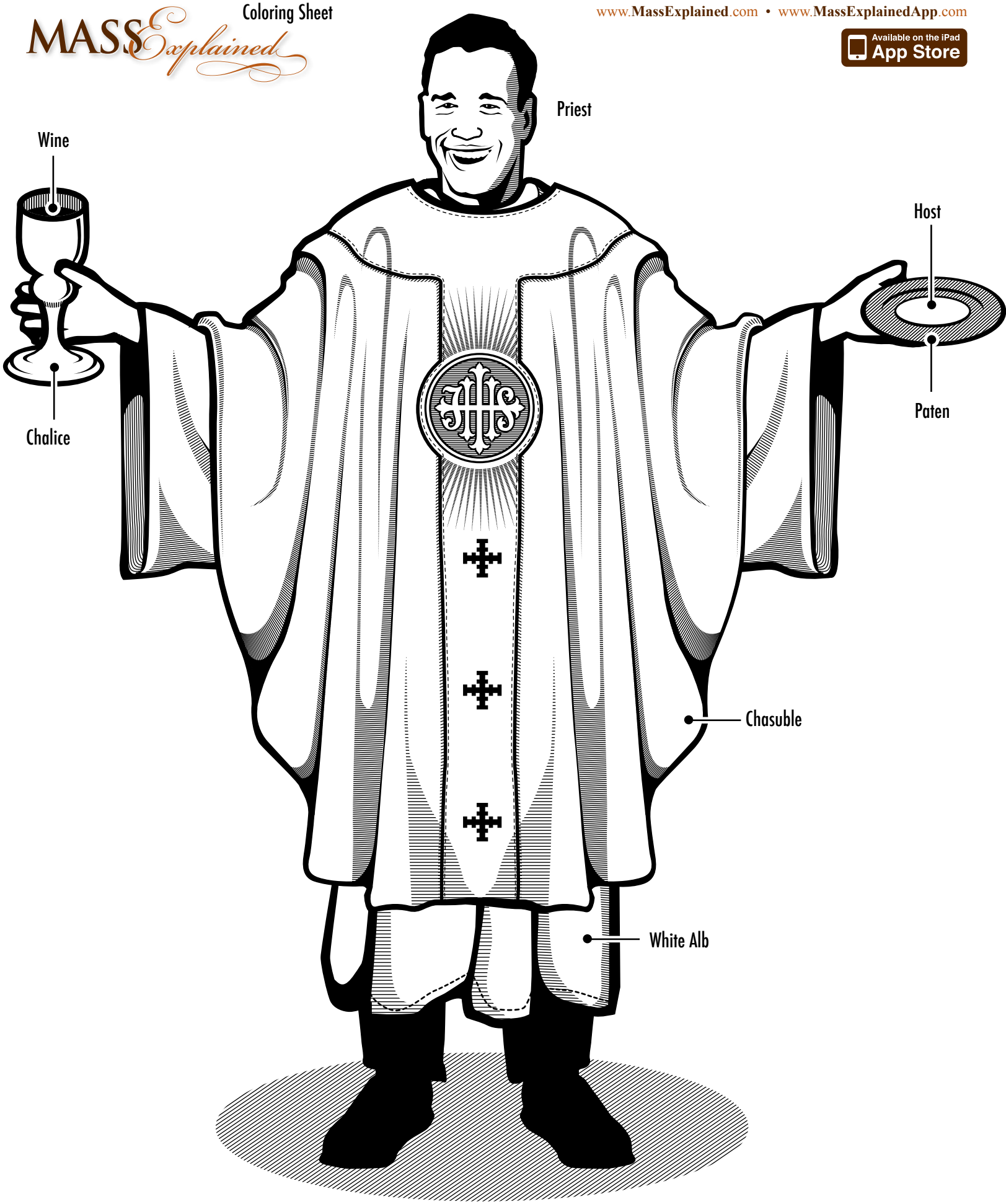

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