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Ixnay on Cappa Magna

Michael Sean Winters | Feb. 16, 2011 Distinctly Catholic

The Paulus Institute [1]will hold its annual Traditional Latin Mass at the National Shrine in Washington this April. Last year, there was some controversy surrounding the event: the intended presider, Cardinal Castrillon-Hoyos, had to beg out at the last minute for fear that his publicly leaked letter urging a bishop not to cooperate with civil authorities regarding a priest accused of sexual molestation of minors threatened to distract attention from the event. Bishop Slattery of Tulsa filled in at the last moment.

One of the things that warms the Tridentine Mass's devotees is the appearance of a prelate in the full cappa magna. My colleague Tom Fox wrote an article [2]about the reappearance of the cappa of late. As he noted, the garment evokes memories of a time - a bad time in the event - when bishops were surrounded by the equivalent of a court atmosphere. Think the Tudors in long robes.

This April, the Paulus Institute's Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop J. Augustine DiNoia, O.P. who is the Secretary of the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship. But, Archbishop DiNoia is a titular archbishop. (His title is the suppressed Archdiocese of Oregon City.) And, because the cappa magna was always a jurisdictional garment, it was never worn by titular bishops and will not be worn by DiNoia. In a world filled with misery, the absence of the vestment will no doubt cause great sadness in certain circles. Me? If I were a bishop (admittedly a horrific thought for all concerned) I would not be caught dead in that thing.

(Update: Thanks to reader for pointing out that it is "Ixnay" not "Ixne" in the title.

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Links:
[1] http://www.pontificalmass.org/
[2] http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/cappa-magna-finding-way-church-pomp