



Thoughts about the Biretta:

(<http://www.ritualnotes.com/reflections/2019/2/8/the-biretta>)

- I Corinthians 11.2-16, St. Paul instructed men to uncover their heads while praying while admonishing the women to keep theirs covered. A Cambridge University professor, Bruce Winter, argues that in first century Roman society, a class of “new wives” emerged. These wives went against traditional expressions of matronly life and were noted for promiscuous activity. If one puts St. Paul’s instructions it would give the impression that Christian women were identifying themselves with the “new wives” of Roman society, something that would hurt their witness and way of life. The point being made is that what we place or not place on our heads conveys a message.
- When a priest wears the head coverings, he should remember the sins of conceit. The biretta adds an element of humility. He may be ridiculed for it; but he endures it for the sake of Christ.
- It is worn with the cassock, usually within the vicinity of the church. Inside the church, it is worn in procession by the Sacred Ministers: priests, deacon, and subdeacon who are serving at the altar. Other clergy who are “in choir” hold the Biretta. It is worn while seated and it is traditional to wear it while giving absolution at confession as a sign of juridical power.
- The main reason one wears the Biretta is so he can take it off. Part of its purpose is to call attention to when it is NOT worn. It is NOT worn at or near the altar and removed when saluting the other clergy who are in the choir. It is NOT worn during procession of the Blessed Sacrament, and it is removed whenever the Holy Name of Jesus is said.
- The Holy Name was given to us to revere and respect as the Name of our Salvation; it is the Name of our hope. Removing the biretta at the Holy Name promotes a certain kind of Christian chivalry. It promotes discipline of the tongue and reverence in speech. It also inculcates an automatic repose to the Holy Name.
- The most significant part about wearing the Biretta is the act of taking the Biretta off whenever the Holy Name of Jesus is said.
 - Over time, bowing the head at the name of Jesus becomes an involuntary devotion. Removing the biretta at the Holy Name is a reminder for all to bow their heads. The hope is that over time, if the removal of the biretta is done regularly, two things will happen: people will pay more attention to the readings and sermon, and they will develop a devotion to the Holy Name.
- The biretta is a protest against vulgarity.
- The biretta reminds the priest that, even if the tonsure has been abolished, he is a joyful slave to Jesus Christ. It is a statement of humility and reverence.

Norms for Wearing the Biretta

(<https://www.anglicanritecatholicchurch.org/biretta.html>)

General Rule: Worn while seated, removed during prayers and while kneeling. Only worn at liturgy while processing by the officiants or Sacred Ministers; all others carry their birettas.

In Solemn Mass:

1. The Sacred Ministers, who are not Bishops, wear the biretta during the procession, while seated and, preferably, while going back and forth between the sedilia and the altar.
2. Clergy in choir carry their birettas in the procession, wear it while seated, and take it off while kneeling or standing.
3. The biretta is removed during the mention of the name of Jesus.
4. The biretta is touched, but not removed during the mention of the name of the Blessed Virgin.
5. The biretta is removed prior to the genuflection by the Ministers upon arriving at the altar, at which point it is taken by the server.
6. The biretta may be worn while preaching and while going to and from the pulpit. It is removed for the prayers before and after the sermon.

In Low Mass:

1. The Biretta is worn to the altar and then removed. Unless a reader is used for the Epistle, or another priest is present to deliver the sermon, the biretta is not worn again until the after the altar is revered at the end of the mass.
2. The Bishop wears the biretta at Low Mass just as a priest.

Transport of Sacred Vessels and of the Enclosed Blessed Sacrament:

1. A priest wears the biretta while transporting the Sacred Vessels to the altar. It is removed upon arrival at the altar and given to the server prior to reverencing the altar. If the priest passes the exposed Blessed Sacrament or the elevations during mass, he stops and genuflects, but does not remove the biretta.
2. A Bishop wears the biretta as a priest unless he is vested in a cope, in which case the mitre would be worn.

Other Liturgy:

1. The Officiant wears the biretta in procession as at mass. All others carry the biretta.
2. The other rules for the use of the biretta at other liturgy is just as that for mass.

Sacraments:

1. Optionally, while pronouncing absolution in Confession.
By the Officiant when proceeding to the font for Solemn Baptism.
By the Officiant at the graveside portion of a funeral.
It is removed for the prayers. It is removed for the blessing of the grave.

Outside Liturgy:

1. The biretta may be worn with house dress, particularly at formal or solemn non-liturgical occasions.
2. It may be worn with academic dress in lieu of the mortarboard or tam.
3. It may be worn while entering and exiting the church.

Colors and Style:

1. The biretta of a Priest or Deacon is black.
2. The biretta of a Bishop is Roman purple.
3. The biretta of a Canon, Dean, or Archdeacon may have an optional Roman purple trim and tuft for Metropolitan or Diocesan prelates, red for prelates of the Patriarchal See.
4. The biretta shall have three wings, except for the academic biretta of a Doctor, which may optionally have four wings.
5. The academic biretta, which may only be worn at academic functions, may have a tuft and trim in the academic color of the highest degree held.