

Is this prelate disobeying a pope?

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Cardinal Raymond BurkeA Friend of mine sent me a photograph the other day of Raymond Cardinal Burke, currently Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the *Apostolic Signatura* and previously having served as Archbishop of St. Louis (2003–2008) and Bishop of La Crosse, Wisconsin (1994–2003).

Cardinal Burke is one of our church's more conservative prelates, meaning he appreciates church tradition and wants to make sure we don't lose some of that tradition in the hustle bustle of modern life.



Burke wearing a galero at the occasion of prize-giving "Nulla sine Verbia Tradition" of the International Catholic Association "Tu es Petrus" in Battipaglia, Italy, 19th of February 2011

Since becoming cardinal the former archbishop of St. Louis has used his new position to celebrate church traditions when given the opportunity. A few months back on this site we showed Burke adorned in a cappa magna, a lengthy red cloth which trailed behind him adding special flare to the Latin rite mass he celebrated at the time.

My friend also knows I, too, enjoy church tradition and enjoy highlighting some of these traditions. Some conservatives think that a progressive like me wants to throw out the past to take on the future. These folks are so wrong. Progressives can appreciate tradition as well. Ironically some of the younger conservatives think they know the past, but what they know is only what they have heard about pre-Vatican II rites. I would challenge any one of these to get through a Latin Mass faster than I can. Of course I learned it by heart as a fifth grader at St. Sebastian elementary school in Milwaukee. Try me:

Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium de manibus tuis ad laudem et gloriam nominis sui, ad utilitatem quoque nostram totius que Ecclesiae suae sanctae.

Back to the photo. Upon receiving the Burke photo I quickly went to work on the Internet to learn more about the hat he was wearing. I learned it's called galero, a cardinal's hat no longer used in any particular church ceremony. Maybe you don't know much about galeros though you have undoubtedly seen some hanging in church cathedrals. Galeros are often hung from the ceiling of a cardinal's home cathedral after his death. Supposedly, when a galero disintegrates and falls to the floor the cardinal's soul has been released from purgatory and ascended to heaven. Funny, I've never seen any galeros on the floor. They're still hanging from the ceilings.



Galero showing tassels

From what I can gather galeros were previously worn by cardinals in festive processions such as at the coronation of a pope in an era when cavalcades with horses were still common. During the period when the pope presented a galero in a consistory, the cardinal receiving it would place it between two candlesticks on a credence table in his antechamber or study. This was considered a sign of respect for the origin of the cardinal's dignity, directly and immediately from the hand of the pope.

The body of the hat is made of felt dyed ruby-red and lined inside with ruby-red silk. From the right and left hand sides of the galero hang red and gold cords ending in a "tassel tree". Each of these "trees" consists of 15 tassels, making 30 tassels in all. Each tassel is ornamented with gold thread and consists of three strings with three smaller tassels. There are also two tassels fixed above the brim of the hat.

Also from what I can gather Cardinal Burke does not go about in public in his galero. This might be bad taste. Certainly, it would strike some as odd. However, I have learned he wears his for special occasions - and this is entirely appropriate for his stature in the church. He might even see his wearing of the hat as some kind of sacrifice.

One of the more interesting elements in a galero are the tufts, which are part of that tassel assembly. It looks like the tassels are a light decorative imitation of the older style flaps, which seem to have hung down from the prelate's neck and shoulder on both sides to shade him from the sun or keep the wind out. Think French Foreign Legion. So logically, you'd keep your tassels secured to your hat if you don't need them, but you would drape them down behind your shoulders if you were going somewhere.

I noticed Pope John XXIII wore a galero on occasion. Pope Benedict has been known to wear a lesser version of the hat. I began wondering why more cardinals do not wear these hats, as they seem to have a practical value. That is keeping the sun off one's face.

But then I stumble across a very interesting fact. It's the kind of fact that web surfers uncover occasionally to their delight, totally unexpected and yet timely and interesting.

What I learned was this. It appears - and I only say appears because I do not know the intent in Cardinal Burke's thinking - that his wearing of the galero is, in fact, an act of papal disobedience. What, you ask. Yet, appears to be true. It was on April 17, 1969 that Pope Paul VI, in a papal decree, ended the galero tradition. Go to point number 9.

These are the words that appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano* on that day: "The red cardinalial hat ('galero') and the red plush hat are abolished. The black plush hat is retained. When appropriate, it can be adorned with the red and gold cord and tassels." [You can check it out](#) [3].

Oh my gosh. I hope I am missing something. Maybe the galero was reinstated in a papal decree I have missed somewhere. Or maybe Cardinal Burke believes he wants to make a point – even it violates a papal directive. If you hear anything or know anything about this, please share it with me in the comments section.

There's got to be room for galeros in our church – especially on sunny days.

By NCR Staff

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