Pope Leo in green vestments

Pope Leo XIV holds his crosier as he celebrates Mass "for the care of creation" on the grounds of the Borgo Laudato Si' ecology center in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, July 9. The vestments he is wearing were made by Chicago-based House of Hansen.
(CNS/Cristian Gennari, pool)

Gina Christian

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Vestments worn by Pope Leo XIV and his concelebrants July 9 at the first Mass "for the care of creation" were made by a firm in his hometown of Chicago.

The pope celebrated the inaugural liturgy — the formulary, or specific texts and prayers, for which were unveiled July 3 — in the Laudato Si' Village (Borgo Laudato Si') at Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer residence.

The village, an ecological educational center, was established by the late Pope Francis and named for his 2015 encyclical on environmental stewardship, with the title of that document in turn derived from a canticle by St. Francis of Assisi.

At the liturgy — which took place on Wednesday of the 14th Week in Ordinary Time, the liturgical color for which is green — Pope Leo wore a deep green, brocade

chasuble made by the Chicago-based House of Hansen. Since 1908, the liturgical goods retailer has outfitted both Catholic and Anglican clergy. It also provides chalices, Communion hosts, rosaries and religious art.

The chasuble also featured a golden brocade orphrey — a vertical band along the vestment's front — bordered by a green and gold knotted embroidery pattern and capped by a circular yoke.

Gerard Arens, who owns and operates the House of Hansen along with his wife, Ellen, told OSV News he already had the pope's measurements, since the former Cardinal Robert Prevost had been a previous customer.

"I've made things (for him) in the past when he was a bishop in Peru. He was here about a year and a half ago," Arens said . "He was in my store, and I got to talk to him for about half an hour. He brought up that he was going to Rome to be (made) a cardinal. He said, 'I have a position there.' "

That encounter took place shortly before then-Archbishop Prevost was elevated to cardinal in 2023 by Pope Francis, who had also appointed him as prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Bishops.

"I said, 'Oh, OK, that's great.' I was congratulating him," Arens said. "And then I couldn't believe when he walked out on the balcony (at St. Peter's Square following his election as pope). He's a customer of ours. We've known him."

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Photos of the liturgy posted by Vatican News July 9 showed the new papal vestments as particularly vivid amid the Laudato Si' Village's outdoor backdrop of trees, flora and statues. The fabric's texture and shimmering colors both complemented and contrasted with the location of the Mass, with the gold orphrey and yoke mirroring the sunbeams that pierced the foliage.

Arens told OSV News the fabric was an ecclesiastical damask by the brand Da Vinci.

"They have a cross in there, (with) almost like a crown of thorns that surrounds the cross," he said.

Arens admitted he was surprised to receive an order from the Vatican — which required "a quick turnaround," he noted.

The original design had to first receive Vatican approval, he said, with a team of some 10 seamstresses and tailors — who were "all excited" — working on site to assemble the vestments.

Upon completion, they were personally couriered to the Vatican by a priest.

"I wouldn't want to rely on FedEx (for that)," Arens said.

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House of Hansen has also provided vestments for the late Chicago Cardinal Francis George, and counts among its current customers Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

Arens said that he'd received only one previous order for papal vestments — from a film production company for use in a movie.

"I remember there were some big stars in it, but it was kind of a flop, I guess, and went right to video," he recalled. "But the pope looked great."

Ditto for the real-life pope, Arens said.

"I was happy with the way they (the vestments) turned out," he said.