

Early Hospitaller Costume



The Rule of the Blessed Raymond du Puy 1120-1160 states that “[The Brethren’s] clothing should be humble, because Our Lord’s poor, whose servants we confess ourselves to be, go naked.”

The church dress of a 12th-15th century **Hospitaller brother** consisted of a black under-robe, similar to a cassock, covered by a black mantle with an eight pointed cross on the left breast. The cross was worn, as the Rule of the Blessed Raymond notes “to the honour of God and of the Holy Cross, that God by that banner, and through faith and works and obedience, may guard and defend us in soul and in body...” A black skull-cap was also generally worn.

On campaign, a **Hospitaller knight** of the 12th-13th century would have worn chain armour, and over it an Order tunic, or surcoat. This surcoat was red with a plain white cross on the front. The Statutes of Fr. Nicholas Le Lorgne (1277-85) decree “all the brethren-at-arms of the Hospital, when armed, should wear the scarlet surcoat with the white cross.”

By the 13th century knights were finding mail armour not only uncomfortable but inadequate protection against weapons such as war hammers and two-handed swords. At first plate armour was simply added to mail armour, but from the 1400s knights wore entire suits of plate armour. The museum has some of the

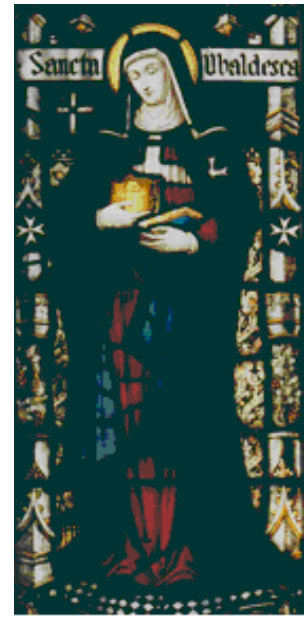


plate armour left in Rhodes when the Order departed in 1523.



Hospitaller sisters

Before the loss of the island of Rhodes by the Order in 1522, the Hospitaller nuns wore a long-sleeved red robe with a plain white cross on the breast. After that time, as mourning for the loss of the island, the robes were black. Over the robe was worn a black mantle, with an eight pointed cross on the left breast. The face was surrounded by a white wimple, which also covered the neck. The head was covered by a black veil.



St. Ulbadessa, early
Hospitaller nun