

Pallium signifies bond to pope

By Archbishop William E. Lori

ROME - Greetings from Rome! During the last few days, I have travelled to Rome on pilgrimage to receive the pallium from Pope Benedict XVI. With me are Bishops Mitchell T. Rozanski and Denis J. Madden, a goodly number of priests, religious and laity from the Archdiocese of Baltimore and beyond. Yet, what happens here has meaning not just for my fellow pilgrims, but indeed for our entire archdiocesan family of faith and for the ecclesiastical province of Baltimore, which includes the Dioceses of Wilmington, Wheeling-Charleston, Richmond and Arlington. Allow me to explain.

First, what is a pallium? The word itself in Latin means “cloak” but the modern pallium looks nothing like a cape or mantle. Rather, it is a circular band, just about two inches wide. It is made of wool and is worn around the neck and has two silk-covered pendants in front and back. The pallium is also adorned with crosses. The next time you watch a papal Mass, you might notice that the Holy Father wears this woolen band, the pallium, on top of his Mass vestment or chasuble. On June 29, the Solemnity of Ss. Peter and Paul, the Holy Father will bestow the pallium on new archbishops throughout the world, including your new archbishop. Returning home, I will wear the pallium on occasions such as principal liturgical feasts (such as Christmas and Easter), priestly and diaconal ordinations, archdiocesan wedding jubilees or whenever I offer Mass in my capacity as Metropolitan Archbishop for the Baltimore Province.

As you can imagine, the pallium has a long and complicated history which I won't attempt to recount in the brief space of this column. Suffice it to say that the first written references to the pallium date from the first half of the fourth century. At first we hear only of the pope's wearing it but later we find that popes bestowed it upon bishops in various dioceses as a sign of honor and as a sign of his closeness to them. In the ninth century it became customary for the pope to confer the pallium on metropolitan archbishops, that is, archbishops who are not only charged to watch

over and care for their own archdioceses but who also who have some responsibility for neighboring dioceses, grouped together in what is known as an ecclesiastical province.

From this very brief reference to the history of the pallium, we begin to see its meaning. It has to do with the relationship between the Holy Father and metropolitan archbishops; in fact, it indicates a bond of unity or communion between the Holy Father and metropolitan archbishops around the world. It speaks of a unity of faith, worship and pastoral care for God's flock scattered throughout the world. The pallium is worn by archbishops to express how the pastoral care of the Holy Father, the universal pastor of the Church, is extended to every ecclesiastical province around the world. And it is a sign of the metropolitan archbishop's love and loyalty for the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ and the Bishop of Rome.

Let's dwell for another moment on the pastoral significance of the pallium. As noted earlier, it is made of wool. In fact, two lambs are presented each year to the Holy Father at his cathedral, St. John Lateran in Rome. They are blessed on the Feast of St. Agnes (agnus = lamb) and then shorn. From their wool the palliums are then woven. Quaint as all this may sound, it has a point.

The lamb's wool is made into a garment that signifies the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ. In what does his priesthood consist? Is it not the magnificent, undeserved act of divine mercy in which Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came to lift upon his shoulders a suffering humanity? Does not his priesthood consist of being the Good Shepherd who became the Lamb of Sacrifice, indeed, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world?" Every time this garment is donned, the one who wears it must not think of honors or prerogatives but rather the Good Shepherd who went in search of the lost sheep and when he found it gently laid it upon his shoulders and brought it back to safety.

And this brings us to the significance of this pilgrimage to Rome. The principal reason for going on pilgrimage is to be with the Lord and fellow pilgrims in prayer. A small group of people representing our family of faith have come to pray with me and for me - that, in closest union with our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, I might be a good shepherd, who, through the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit,

works closest with clergy, religious and laity to strengthen the unity of the church so as to reach out in truth and love to those who have left the church or to those searching for the fullness of truth, or to those members of the church who find themselves in times of trouble. My role as shepherd extends to working closely with the wonderful bishops of this province to instill this spirit of the new evangelization ever more deeply throughout this region.

Dear friends, my days in Rome have taken me to major basilicas and to altars where saints are buried, and ultimately to the Holy Father, the successor of St. Peter, who continually strengthens his brother bishops by word and example. Going from place to place, I have brought you with me spiritually and at every stop I have prayed for an increase of holiness throughout our family of faith, for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, and for freedom and peace so that we may go about our mission of faith, worship and service, unfettered and joyfully. Please continue to pray for me; please beseech the Good Shepherd that I might be a good man, a holy priest, and a wise and loving bishop. Thank you and God bless you!

To read CRMedia CEO and associate publisher/editor Christopher Gunty's blog from Rome as the archbishop prepares to receive the pallium, [click here](#).

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