

Pope gives pallium to 46 archbishops as sign of unity with him

VATICAN CITY - Placing the pallium, a woolen band, around the shoulders of 46 archbishops from around the world, Pope Benedict XVI prayed that they would be true shepherds of their flocks and always united with the pope.

"May this pallium be for you a symbol of unity and a sign of communion with the Apostolic See," the pope said as the archbishops named in the past year knelt before him during the June 29 Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.

The 46 archbishops, who concelebrated the Mass with the pope, included U.S. Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky.; and Canadian Archbishops Gerard Pettipas of Grouard-McLennan, Alberta; Thomas Collins of Toronto; Richard Smith of Edmonton, Alberta; Terrence Prendergast of Ottawa; and Brendan O'Brien of Kingston, Ontario.

Five other archbishops, who were unable to travel to Rome, will receive their palliums from the Vatican nuncio in their home country.

The Mass marked the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, patron saints of Rome.

During his homily, the pope greeted a three-member delegation representing Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. Each year the pope and the patriarch send official delegations to the feast day celebrations of each other's patron saints.

At the end of the Mass, the pope and the Orthodox prelates, led by Archbishop Emmanuel of France, descended the stairs under the basilica's main altar to pray together at the tomb of St. Peter.

Pope Benedict prayed that in professing faith in Jesus Christ "we can feel and be one despite the divisions that over the centuries have lacerated the unity of the church

with consequences that still continue.”

The pope’s feast day homily focused on St. Peter’s profession of faith in Jesus as Christ, son of the living God.

Carrying a shopping bag with a box containing his pallium, Archbishop Kurtz told Catholic News Service, “the whole Mass and ceremony kept saying to us, ‘You are Christ, the only son of God.’”

It was a reminder that “we are called to serve Christ in union with the Holy Father,” he said.

The archbishop said the fact that he was just named to the Archdiocese of Louisville June 12 and will not be installed as archbishop until Aug. 15 meant there was no time to organize an archdiocesan pilgrimage to travel to Rome with him.

But, he said, “that allowed for a very spiritual mindset” and means he will enter the Louisville Archdiocese wearing a symbol of “the yoke, serving the people in the name and the power of Christ,” who carried the lost sheep back to the flock.

“I think it’s beautiful to be able to go to my installation with the pallium,” he said. “I will bring it to the people.”

In his homily, the pope said that in St. Matthew’s Gospel, immediately after Peter proclaimed his faith in Christ, Jesus said he would build his church on Peter, making it clear that Peter’s profession of faith “is inseparable from the pastoral task entrusted to him.”

In asking the disciples who the crowd thinks he is, then who they think he is, “Jesus invites them to make a choice that can distinguish them from the crowd so they become the community of believers in him, his family, the beginnings of the church,” the pope said.

“There are two ways of seeing and knowing Jesus: one – that of the crowd – is more superficial; the other – that of the disciples – is more penetrating and authentic,” he said.

The crowd thinks Jesus is a prophet, the pope said. "This is not false, but it is not enough. It is inadequate."

Even today, the pope said, people recognize Jesus' "spiritual and moral stature and his influence on human history, comparing him to Buddha, Confucius, Socrates and other wise and great historic personalities. But they do not reach the point of recognizing his uniqueness."

Because he truly is God incarnate and because he suffered, died and rose from the dead, Jesus is more than a prophet, Pope Benedict said: He is the one savior of all humanity.

Reciting the Angelus after Mass, Pope Benedict told the crowd in St. Peter's Square, "Let us continue to support these archbishops and sustain them with our prayers as they strive to be zealous Christian leaders."

He also said the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul is an occasion "to pray intensely and act with conviction for the cause of the unity of all Christ's disciples."

Pope Benedict said Catholics and Orthodox "are very close to each other and already can count on a communion that is almost full, as we are reminded by the Second Vatican Council, the light that guides the steps of the ecumenical journey."

Catholic-Orthodox meetings and official dialogue sessions "are not simply gestures of courtesy or attempts to reach compromises, but are a sign of our common will to do what is possible so that, as soon as possible, we can reach that full communion for which Christ implored."

The pope later met privately with the Orthodox delegation, telling members ecumenism cannot be left to church leaders and theologians but must be included in the religious education programs of young Catholics and Orthodox.

The young, he said, need to have "a full knowledge of their own ecclesial identity and of the bonds of communion existing with other brothers and sisters in Christ, without forgetting the problems and obstacles that still prevent full communion between us."