

Facts about the Pallium

WHAT'S HAPPENING: Detroit Archbishop Allen Vigneron, along with other bishops of major metropolitan areas from around the world, will receive a pallium from Pope Benedict XVI.

WHEN: June 29, 2009, The Feast of SS. Peter & Paul. The liturgy is at 9:30 a.m. Vatican Time (3:30 a.m. Detroit Time)

WHERE: Basilica of St. Peter at the Vatican

WHAT IT MEANS: The pallium is worn by all metropolitans in their jurisdictions which is their ecclesiastical provinces. The province of the seven dioceses of Michigan is the jurisdiction of Archbishop Vigneron. Among the bishops in this province, he functions as the first among equals and the pallium is a sign of his jurisdiction.

WHAT IT IS: The pallium is a narrow band woven from white lamb's wool. It is shaped like a loop and has two dependent lappets, before and behind, and is worn over the chasuble resting on the shoulders. Seen from the front or back it resembles the letter "Y." It is decorated with six black crosses, one on each tail and four on the loop, and has three jeweled pins.

ITS HISTORY: The pallium is an ancient garment and predates Christ. It was originally a long scarf-like garment worn for warmth. It was adopted by the early Christians as a sign of their fidelity to Christ. In this form, symbols began to be included on pallia: first the fish and in later times, the cross. By the fourth century, it was adopted by the bishop of Rome (the pope). By the fifth century, the pallium was the exclusive gift of the Pope, reserved for highest clergy. By the ninth century, the pallium was reserved for metropolitans, and archbishops.

ABOUT THE CEREMONY: On the eve of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the pallia are carried with great ceremony to the crypt beneath the altar at the Basilica of St. Peter. The next morning they are carried in procession to Mass for the investiture ceremony, where they are solemnly blessed by the Holy Father.

USE OF THE PALLIUM: Once he receives the pallium, the archbishop wears it whenever he is vested in sacred vestments. He never uses it when vested in choir or academic dress. Whenever the pope is present, he (the pope) is the only one entitled to wear the pallium. The pallium is so important that those who are invested with it are permitted the privilege of being buried with it.